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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 514. FOR WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 5TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 514. ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending
November 5th, 1898.

THOSE WHO FOUGHT AT OMDURMAN.

No. 6.—Officer of the Camel Corps.

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And it Came to Pass.

"OH, turn it off, Melrose!"

"I beg your pardon. Was I staring?"

"You have done nothing else for the last ten minutes," and Cyril St. Austen laughed in a quiet, lady-like way.

Lord Melrose pushed his cup across the table and gave a little apologetic shrug.

"What a curious fellow you are," he said, with an amused smile. "If I were in your place, by Jove! I should be drinking brandy laced with champagne instead of tea."

The wintry sunlight flooded through the mullioned window, giving a cheerful aspect to the luxurious little room; there were violets on the carved oak mantel-piece, and primroses on the cosy breakfast-table drawn near the fire.

St. Austen opened his brown eyes wide and stared at his companion.

"We have always been pals," he said; "I wonder how many more years it will be before you understand me."

"Upon my word, I don't know," Melrose answered, with a touch of irony. "Diagnosis of character is one thing; the interpretation of an enigma of your kind another."

"Thanks."

St. Austen got up and crossed over to the window. Piccadilly was only half awake, and a thick slush betokened the rain which had fallen during the night. With a little shudder he turned back towards the fire.

"Ugh! Fancy going out a day like this."

Cyril helped himself to a cigarette; his hand trembled slightly as he stooped down and lighted a cedar wood spill in the fire.

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"There you go," said Lord Melrose, "shivering at the thought of turning out on a beastly morning, and yet you only steady your nerves with tea, when any other man would be white and haggard and——"

St. Austen interrupted his friend with a laugh.

"I assure you life is much easier if you never let anything worry you. Things always turn out for the best if you don't interfere. That's my creed. You think I'm a ruined man, and, by Jove! so I am if Isaacs has got out of bed the wrong side. But d'ye think I'd care if I was?"

The two men faced one another on the hearthrug. St. Austen's smooth, baby-like face and mild blue eyes contrasted strangely with the other's bronzed military appearance and long black moustache.

"I have seen pluck on the frontier," said Lord Melrose slowly, disarranging the violets to make himself a button-hole. "I have seen the V. C. won, but upon my word, old man, you beat the lot of us."

"Nonsense," said St. Austen quickly, "I'm like the coward who shuts his eyes and walks across the Strand, and hopes he won't get run over and generally doesn't. I'm too lazy to dodge the traffic, that's all."

He called his man and sent out for a cab and the *Financial News*. Then he turned to his companion.

"I say, old fellow, will you come with me?"

Lord Melrose declined promptly.

"Considering all things we'd better not meet just at present," he said. "Isaacs thinks I am in India, and the delusion is worth the best part of £5,000 to me."

And so St. Austen set out alone, and, as he went down the stairs Lord Melrose heard him whistling and occasionally smacking his hands together as if he felt the cold.

Mr. Isaacs' office in Jermyn Street was an elegantly furnished room with a thick Brussels carpet, and comfortable easy chairs scattered about. A cheerful fire burnt in the grate, and a small terrier stood with its paws on the fender, and its head turned away from the heat.

The Jew looked up when St. Austen entered, and by sheer force of habit rose from his chair.

"Ah. You got my letter then?"

St. Austin nodded.

"Made capital spills," he said, turning a cat off the chair nearest Mr. Isaacs' desk, and arranging himself slowly. "If you don't charge 6s. 8d. for writing them you might send me a few more. So you intend to summon me, eh?"

"I shall be compelled to take that course unless you pay back at least £20,000 before to-morrow."

St. Austen turned out his pockets and produced three pounds, which he held out mockingly.

"Will you have this on account?"

The Jew's dark face flushed.

"I am not joking, Mr. St. Austen," he said, shifting a pile of papers on his desk, and then getting up in an uneasy sort of way. "If it had ever occurred to me that your father might marry again I should never have advanced you sixpence."

"I don't suppose you would. That's where the joke comes in."

"And you will be still laughing at it when I summon you."

St. Austen stooped down and stroked the cat which was rubbing itself against his legs.

"What's the good of summoning me?" he asked.

Mr. Isaacs returned to his desk and twisted his chair round to his visitor

"I will tell you. I know as well as you do that you have not got a penny in the world. I know that you have got so-called 'debts of honour,' which make you wish you had; otherwise, you would have been off to America long ago."

"You seem tolerably well up in the subject," observed St. Austen, straightening himself with a little jerk. "Go on."

"When your name appears in the police reports your father will pay anything to save a scandal—for his wife's sake."

"Ah!"

The Jew's eyes fell in an embarrassed way before the other's gaze.

"I suppose if I told you that my father would do nothing of the sort, you would believe me."

"No I should not."

"Very well, then summon me."

St. Austen rose and picked up his hat. In another moment he was standing outside in the street. He had anticipated the worst and the worst had happened. Ruin stared him in the face.

Ten minutes later he pushed open his sitting-room door and Melrose threw down his paper and jumped up eagerly.

"Well, old man, is it peace?"

"He is going to summon me. You know what that means."

There was no sign of agitation on St. Austen's face.

Looking at the two men a casual observer would have said that Lord Melrose was the sufferer.

"And you don't care?"

This absolute stoicism annoyed Melrose inexpressibly.

"Of course I care. I'm not going to tear my hair though; or put on sackcloth and ashes. It's always best to let things run their course."

"By which you mean that something will turn up."

"Precisely; and if it doesn't what's the good of struggling against fate? Come and have a game of billiards till lunch time."

A telegram had been delivered during St. Austen's absence; he took it up as they went out and opened it on the stairs.

"Excuse me for a minute," he said, "I must read it because one never knows—hullo—look here," the pink form fluttered to the ground and St. Austen leant back against the wall.

Lord Melrose picked the telegram up and read it through.

"Your father is dying. Come at once. He has promised to sign a will in Mr. Phillip's favour. —HODSON."

"Phillip?"

"Mrs. St. Austen's son."

"How dreadful!" Melrose exclaimed. "Poor old chap, I am sorry for you."

St. Austen nodded his head gratefully.

"I can't help loving the old man in spite of everything," he said half apologetically. "Dear old Hodson, she always stood up for me."

"What are you going to do?"

"I suppose I must go down. I always anticipated this, but it is just possible he might relent if he saw me. Isaacs will be sold anyway. If I get the money he will be sorry he took out the summons; and if I don't he will have all the expense for nothing——"

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"Never mind Isaacs now," interrupted Melrose. "Where do you keep your Bradshaw?"

St. Austen threw it to him, and sat down to write a letter.

"Look here, can't you attend for one minute?"

Cyril laid down his pen with a sigh. "All right; what is it, old man?"

"You have just missed the only train which makes the connection. By Jove! you'll have to take a special."

St. Austen turned round and went on with his writing.

"That's out of the question," he said calmly. "I haven't got any money."

"Will you leave off that writing for a minute, or I swear I'll go and leave you to yourself. You must get home to-night. What a confounded fool you are! A little energy, and you may save a fortune; and here you are drifting towards absolute ruin and disgrace, and wasting your time by writing a letter to some girl."

"My dear Melrose, please don't work yourself up like that.

"You've looked it up in Bradshaw and found there isn't a train, haven't you? Well, that settles it. What's the good of worrying? Now if you will just be quiet while I write this note I shall be free——"

Lord Melrose said afterwards he could have taken St. Austen by the scruff of the neck and shaken him with the greatest of pleasure.

"Take a special, man," he roared. "Look here, I'll lend you the money if that's all."

St. Austen shrugged his shoulders and got up from his chair.

"If there isn't a train I'm not going. If I was wanted down there the telegraph boy would have come here without stopping to play marbles on the way, and the wire would have reached me before I went out—in time to catch the mid-day train. All these things were arranged ages ago. It's no good fighting against our destiny. Now if you'll just be quiet while I write this——"

"Perhaps the programme arranged that you should take a special. Perhaps there is a goods train which wants to be smashed up; perhaps that's why the telegraph boy stopped to play marbles on the way; perhaps——"

St. Austen held up a deprecating hand. He had not thought of the matter in this light before and for a moment he was puzzled.

He thought it out slowly, drumming a little air on the table with his fingers.

"I call that legislating and not construing the law of Destiny," he said at last. "Now if you will only just be quiet while I write this note——"

"Listen, Cyril."

"No, no. For goodness sake let the matter drop. I can't be bothered with these things. The probability is if I took your advice I shouldn't be allowed to go into the house, or something like that. Besides I don't wan't to smash up any luggage trains. That's just the sort of thing which does happen when a man begins to interfere. Now if you'll just be quiet while I finish this note I shall be free to go out with you to lunch."

* * * * *

Old Mrs. Hodson was right. Mr. St. Austen was dying.

The doctor had told him years before that his end would come suddenly, and he faced death with a heroic fortitude which touched the hearts of all those who waited on him.

Mrs. Hodson persisted in hovering round him, hoping against hope that at the last moment he would forgive her darling.

Cyril's name however never passed his lips, and his last hours were drawing near.

Everyone had forgotten about a will until the doctor mentioned it. A telegram was sent at once by the second Mrs. St. Austen to the family solicitor in London. Hour after hour had passed since then, and still he did not come. A great fear seized her that after all the old man might die intestate; in that case she would only get one-third of his fortune, and Phillip would get nothing.

She was sitting alone in her husband's room. It was a large, luxuriously furnished apartment, and a huge fire threw fantastic wavering shadows on the walls and carpet.

Struck with a sudden idea she laid down her novel and stole quietly across to the massive mahogany writing table. Taking a half sheet of writing paper she drew out her husband's last will and testament, stopping every now and then to refer to a legal text book at her elbow.

The reading lamp threw a ghastly pallor over her face through its green shade. Occasionally the sufferer on the bed moved in a restless sort of way.

She read it through, nodding to herself and smiling, and then, taking a pen in her hand, she crept to her husband's bedside and roused him gently.

"Darling, you must sign this," she whispered, "or else everything will go to Cyril, and Phillip and I will be cast upon the world."

The old man turned restlessly, and raised himself on his pillow.

"Hush! I cannot bear to hear his name. Give me the pen."

Mrs. St. Austen slipped across the room and called softly to two maidservants who were making her bed in an adjoining apartment. They came to their master's bedside, their eyes filled with tears, and keeping close together.

The will was signed and witnessed; the girls crept back to their work, crying.

Mrs. St. Austen crossed over the room and held the half sheet of note paper to the fire. At last she was safe. Phillip would be one of the richest commoners in England before the grey light of morning crept through the shutters.

Mrs. Hodson's step was heard outside. With a guilty start of which she felt ashamed, Mrs. St. Austen slipped the half sheet of paper in the blotting pad and snatched up her novel.

An hour later the first gong sounded faintly. She laid down her book and went out into the passage.

The sufferer's face was growing more and more transparent; it was evident he had not many more hours to live.

Mrs. Hodson crept to his side.

"Sir, say you forgive Mr. Cyril. Say you forgive him."

The old man waved her away impatiently.

"No. No, I can't."

He stretched out his hand and the old woman took it and held it between her own, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"Won't you forgive Mr. Cyril?"

A sort of groan broke from Mr. St. Austen. He

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tossed himself from one side of the bed to the other, and doubled up his knees.

"You must forgive him, sir. What will you say to his mother when you meet her up there to-night?"

With a cry the sufferer sat upright in his bed. The firelight lit up his drawn and haggard face.

"Yes—yes—you are right. I—I—tell him that I forgive him. Tell him, Mrs. Hodson. Promise you will tell him."

The old head fell back on the pillows, the eyes closed, the breathing seemed to stop.

Suddenly he moved again.

"Paper!" gasped the old man, "paper!" The housekeeper took a sheet from the blotter.

"Write it down, write it down." he murmured, pushing back the hair from his forehead. "I leave my son Cyril a thousand a year for his life—only for life," he added. "Witnesses"

Mrs. Hodson ran towards the door and flew down the stairs, passing Mrs. St. Austen on the threshold.

"Margaret," called the old man. "Is that you, Margaret? Good-bye, darling. Say good-bye to Phillip."

Mrs. St. Austen bent over and kissed him fondly on the forehead. As she did so her eye fell on the codicil lying on the counterpane just where it had dropped from the old man's fingers.

With a little cry she took it up and read it. Then with a defiant look at the expiring man she crushed it between her fingers and, crossing over the room, she threw it with a vicious little laugh in the fire.

* * * * *

A week later Lord Melrose was breakfasting again with Cyril.

"Upon my word," he remarked, tapping the top of his egg and yawning contentedly, "upon my word it's more than you deserve. It was the nearest thing in the world The odds were at least a million to one against. Gad! You ought to be just as ashamed of yourself as young Hastings who won every penny he's got at Monte Carlo."

Cyril laughed good-naturedly.

"It was all arranged ages ago," he said. "What's the good of bothering. If you want to get on in the world sit tight. That's my motto. It all comes right in the end."

For the will disinheriting Cyril had been burnt by his step-mother. Mrs. Hodson's codicil had by a strange freak of luck been written on the back of the self-same sheet of note paper.

And so it came to pass that in these days Cyril is the richest commoner in England, and Mr. Isaacs grovels mournfully and asks him to recommend his friends.

M. H.

CASHIER (of bank): "You'll have to bring some one here to identify you before we can cash this cheque. Got any friends in the town?"

Stranger: "No. I'm a tax collector."

HIGH-PRICED Doctor: "You are now convalescent and all you need now is exercise. You should walk ten, twenty, thirty miles a day, sir; but your walking should have an object."

Patient: "All right, doctor. I'll travel round trying to borrow enough to pay your bill."

RESULT OF DISTRIBUTION No. 2.

Three persons have this week applied for a sovereign each:

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19 Stanton Road,
Barnes, S.W.

Mrs. F. W. FRYER,
12 Holker Street,
Barrow-in-Furness.

G. ROBERTS,
Dairy Supply Co.,
Museum Street,
London, W.C.

The names of the following people had been selected, but none of them applied, and, consequently, each is £1 the poorer by it:

W. S. Mathers, 15 George Street, Montrose, Forfarshire; Miss Clara Long, 102 Oxford Street, Great Grimsby; Richard Baglin, 5 Hungerford Street, Cheltenham; Miss Tilly Greenspoon, 42 New Street, Dublin; James Clifton, 9 Marted Road, Peckham; H. Boys, 200 North End Road, West Kensington; Miss Cookson, 33 Crown Street, Newark-upon-Trent; Mrs. Irvine, Lochfoot, Dumfries; Miss Capps, 13 London Road, Spalding; T. H. Melen, 3 Yoek Street, West Cliff, Ramsgate; Miss Brown, Springfield, Tirley, Glos.; J. P. Endered, Evesham Road, Headless Cross, Redditch; G. Clayton, 59 Cromwell Road, Bristol; Miss M. Abbott, York Villa, Norbiton, Surrey; O. H. Sharrott, Chestnut House, Tamworth; Mrs. S. Williamson, 42 Ordnance Street, Chatham; Thomas Davidson, 18 Granville Terrace, Edinburgh; J. Whitehead, 1 Willington Square, Harrogate; F. Pratt, 2 Wanderers Avenue, Wolverhampton; G. Tuck, The Limes, Victoria Street, Windsor; J. Webb, 61 Caversham Road, Reading; Miss M. M'Caughley, 34 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast; J. B. Batchelor, Elm Cottage, Military Road, Limerick; C. T. Frost, 11 Hosworth, Rugby; R. Luckin, Fortescue Hotel, Plymouth; Mrs. Green, 315 Oxford Road, Macclesfield; J. E. Watson, Magdalene Lane, Taunton, Som.; Arthur Gray, 48 Tasburgh Street, Grimsby; Charles Wilson, 303 Goldhawk Road, Shepherd's Bush; Walter Grimes, 6 Netherton Road, St. Margaret's, Twickenham; Mrs. O'Sullivan, 81 North Main Street, Cork; Joseph Broadbent, 12 Furness Street, Hyde, Cheshire; F. T. Gibson, 24 Elmwood Street, Sunderland; F. Morsfold, 5 Lansdowne Place, Upper Norwood; Miss M. Hughes, 25 St. Andrew's Road, Liverpool; Miss E. Crampborn, 4 Wellington Road, Wanstead, N.E.; A. B. Lee, 160 Shaw Heath, Stockport; P. C. Grant, 135 Hoe Street, Walthamstow; A. Braham, 4, Ealing Road, Ealing, W.; Thomas Hilton, 12 Grove End Road, Woodford; Miss Tickell, 14 Lemon Street, Truro; W. Denmore, 22 College Street, Leicester; L. Stewart, 37 Carleton Road, Tufnell Park, N.; W. Meek, 15 Tait Street, Carlisle; A. J. Smith, Broadfields, Wylde Green, Birmingham; W. Cross, 74 Brixton Road, S.W.; W. Stanley, 157 High Street, Croydon.

Several readers have asked whether they may enter for the *Home Notes*, *Athletic Record*, and *Pearson's Weekly* distributions as well as *Short Stories*; if so, whether the applications may be made on the same postcard. Readers may apply in all or any of the distributions, but each application must be made on a separate card.

As a certain proportion of the names given above are those of people who are not readers of *Short Stories*, and as it may so happen that the names selected this week are those of people who are similarly unenlightened, I would point out the advisability of your saying a few words on the subject to your neighbour, or to the man you meet in the train. It can do you no harm; it may do them good. Ladies, particularly, have many opportunities for chatting on a subject of this kind, and it would be doing yourself and your friend and us a good turn to tell your lady acquaintances all about the scheme. A sovereign is always a welcome addition to a man's coffers or to a woman's dress allowance. What is there to prevent you from helping yourself and your friends at the same time.

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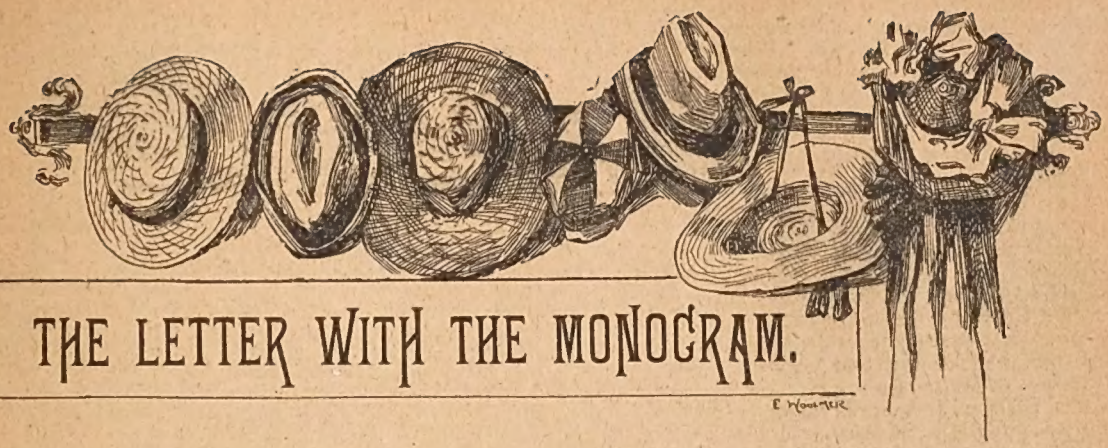

THE LETTER WITH THE MONOGRAM.

It was towards the close of a dreary November afternoon. Outside, the wind was howling mournfully among the leafless branches of the tall elms.

The sky was a cold, dull grey, except in the west, where an angry streak of red stretched along the horizon, making a bright back-ground for the tall, naked elms that bordered the drive.

Inside, the scene was scarcely less dreary. A fire burnt slowly in the old-fashioned grate in the library, throwing its shadows upon the walls and ceiling, bringing into view the book-cases, crowded with richly-bound volumes, now leaping higher and higher, and casting its shadows among the oaken rafters that studded the ceiling; then, as if ashamed of its sudden uprising, sinking down almost into its embers.

The two occupants of the room were watching its fantastic movements, each, however, without a thought of the fire itself. He was standing with his elbow on the mantelpiece, his hand supporting his head. She was sitting on the opposite side, nervously twisting her handkerchief in and out through her fingers. Her face wore an indifferent expression, but it was with difficulty that she could refrain from every now and then glancing at that of her companion.

There had been a misunderstanding between them; not one of those trivial, inconsequential quarrels that make Cupid's heart weep for an hour or so, and afterwards brighter and happier for the little cloud, but rather one of those where love's sweet dream, cherished, it may have been, for years, is likely to be crushed.

She had accused him and he had explained, but to no avail. An awkward pause ensued; neither knew just what to say. Finally she broke the silence.

"Yes, I loved you. To be true to myself, I admit it. I loved you for what I thought you were, but now that I have found my faith in you is groundless, I release you."

Still he held his peace and continued to watch the fire, his mind busy with the past. His silence exasperated her. At last she arose, and, crossing over to the writing-table, opened one of its drawers and took from it a bundle of letters.

They were tied with a pink ribbon, and were, as he knew, those he had written since their engagement. She tried to untie the knot, but, being unable to do so, gave it a vicious little twitch, when the ribbon broke, and the letters scattered right and left.

He bent down, and, gathering them up, handed them to her.

"I do not want them. I was going to burn them but will leave that delightful task to you," she said, in a tone meant to display indifference and sarcasm, but which, as such, was a miserable failure.

He drew a chair up to the grate, and seating himself, began to read, as he finished each one dropping it into the fire. It seemed to her she had never seen him so cool and self-possessed before. It seemed as though her heart would break as, one by one, the letters she had longed for, loved, and cherished were dropped into the fire.

Outside, the wind still mourned in and out among the branches of the elms, whose creaking and twisting afforded a weird accompaniment. The room was almost in darkness, except for the light of the fire, whose flaring arms seemed to wave for joy every time the silent reader dropped a letter into its depths, and to spring up in a mocking, tantalising manner.

At last he came to one almost covered with monograms. Oh, how quickly it all flashed before her mind! That lovely summer morning, a year ago, when he had twined her initials with his and then blushed to find the combination spelt "L. O. V. E." Oh, he must not burn that one!

Slowly, and with an almost imperceptible sigh he replaced it in its envelope and consigned it to the fate of the others.

"Oh, how could you!" she cried, and darted forward, but ere she could save it the mocking flames claimed it as their own.

The young man was startled at this sudden outbreak and glanced up in unfeigned surprise.

Such a pitiful, pleading face looked down into his, the tears coursing down her cheeks, her two little white hands clasped in front, that it was no wonder he instantly forgave her all the unkind words and cruel thrusts that only a woman can give.

He reached out, and, taking both her hands in his, drew her down till her head rested upon his shoulder.

"No, dear, you need not tell me," as she essayed to speak. "I know you did not mean all you said. I know you love me; don't you, dear?"

And she who had pretended to be so cold and sarcastic, dignified and withering, nestled closer to him and whispered:

"Yes, Lionel, and you will forgive me?" While the treacherous, fickle fire now tossed it arms as joyfully as it had mockingly only a few moments before.

D. MILLAR.

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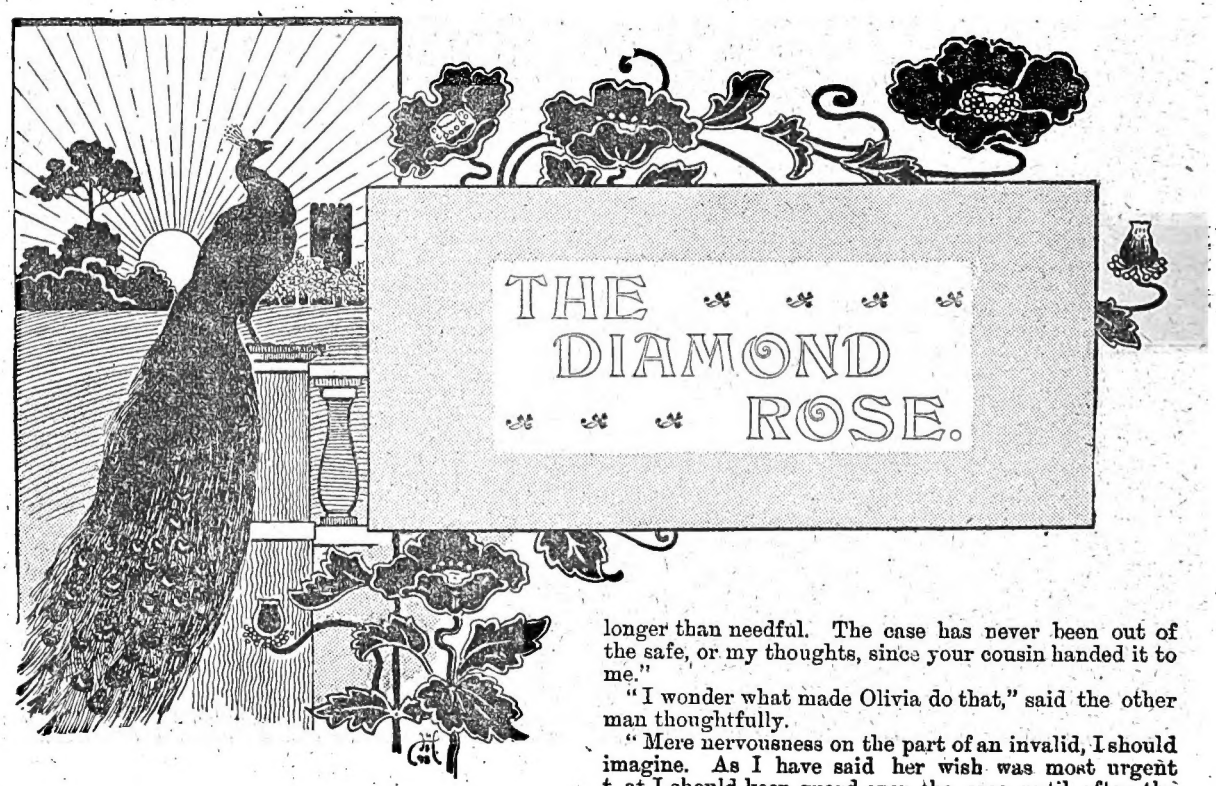

THE clean-cut, good natured features of William Sebright, lawyer, wore an unusual expression of anxiety.

"He must have come in by this time," he said, half aloud; "I shall be glad to have done with the whole business."

Then he rose, went to the other end of the room, and unlocking a small iron safe, took therefrom a sandal-wood box fastened with clasps of antique silver: apparently a lady's jewel case. He re-locked the safe and left the room, carrying the box.

After traversing a long gallery he descended a flight of stairs without meeting a soul; a noticeable stillness reigned in the house, perhaps owing to the fact that only the previous day, its young mistress, Olivia Hennesey, had been laid in the grave, and now her cousin, John Hennesey, reigned in her stead.

Sebright crossed the hall, and opened a door of a room at the far side.

A tall man of about two-and-thirty was restlessly pacing within, and the face turned to greet the lawyer was worn with secret grief.

Sebright placed the sandal-wood box upon the table without a word.

"Ah, you have brought the jewels?" said John carelessly.

"Yes, and heartily glad I am to be rid of them; only waited until I felt sure you must have come in."

Hennesey threw himself into a chair by the fire.

"Ah, well, there is no need to look at them now. Stay and have a pipe."

"Honestly, I should be glad if you would satisfy yourself that they are there—right with the list. One does not care to have the responsibility of that sort of thing longer than needful. The case has never been out of the safe, or my thoughts, since your cousin handed it to me."

"I wonder what made Olivia do that," said the other man thoughtfully.

"Mere nervousness on the part of an invalid, I should imagine. As I have said her wish was most urgent t at I should keep guard over the case until after the funeral; the key remaining in your possession. Then, when we two were alone, I was to hand it over to you. Now I have fulfilled my charge I will go back to the deeds; but let me know that all is right."

The lawyer cultivated tact and ready sympathy; he had reason to think that John Hennesey would not care for a witness when he counted over the jewels inseparably associated with the vanished beauty of Olivia, his cousin, and, therefore, went back to his rooms.

Soon afterwards Hennesey entered the lawyer's room abruptly—startling him from his pipe and easy chair.

"Good heavens! Hennesey, anything wrong? What's the matter?"

"This is the matter," said Hennesey. He held out a small leathern jewel case, open; the case and the lining were both old, and upon the faded satin rested what was evidently a part of an ornament of rare design and workmanship.

It consisted of a stem of chased gold, fashioned like the stem of a rose, and bearing two leaves of fine-gold fretwork, veined with seed pearls, the serrations pointed with emeralds. From these leaves the stem rose and curved slightly, but had apparently been sharply cut or broken.

The lawyer leant forward staring, and holding on by the arms of his leathern chair.

"What—the rose—gone?" There was a moment's silence, then with an upward glance keen and quick, he added: "By Jove! Hennesey, you don't think——"

Hennesey laughed

"Oh, make your mind easy, the rose has been gone these three months, and it is I who am supposed to have taken it. Olivia died, believing that I stole it from her."

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Sebright looked utterly mystified.

"I never heard a word of this."

"No, the poor child kept silence, thinking to shield me. There has been a cruel trick played upon me and upon her. It was her desire to shield me, even after her death, from awkward discoveries that made her place the jewel case in your keeping till I could receive it into my own. I found a letter inside here, where the rose should have been."

"Can you give me particulars?"

"Oh certainly; they must become public before long. She wrote as though the whole affair were foreknown to me, but I gather that some villain, by the aid of a mask and fancy dress, impersonated me at the ball given by the Seymours in May. He talked to Olivia for some time, and managed the business so cleverly, that she fully believed she was speaking to me, and allowed him to hold her cloak when she was leaving. As he was wrapping it round her, she turned to say good-night to someone. The diamond rose fastened some draperies on her left shoulder. As he was arranging the cloak, standing behind her, he must have leant over and contrived with his right hand to snap the rose from its stem. She saw the gleam of the diamonds in his closed hand as she turned back her head; but in her fear and horror she would not attract attention, or betray what she believed to be my crime. She only whispered an entreaty that I would come to her on the morrow. In the carriage she assured herself that her suspicions were correct, that the rose was gone.

"Of course I was never at the ball at all, but I had talked of going, and helped to choose her dress. My departure the next day and subsequent silence naturally deepened the apparent malice of my crime. I seemed to be trading on her forbearance. She feared to write me on the subject, but meant to take steps for the restitution of the stones, at her own expense, if needful, on my return, and implored me to fulfil her intent."

"Where were you on the night of the ball?"

"I never left my rooms. A press of work came in at the last moment. I was starting for Paris the next day and sent word that my going had become impossible to Margaret, my sister, early in the afternoon, and asked her to tell Olivia. I don't remember speaking of the matter to anyone else."

"And the dress worn by your impersonator, does Miss Hennesey mention it?"

"She does not refer to it; that, however, might be learnt from Mrs. Seymour. I had intended going as Romeo."

Afternoon deepened into twilight while the two men were still reviewing the bearings of the case; although beyond one or two points rendered evident by circumstances, little was to be gained by the discussion. The area in which the thief might be looked for was narrowed by the facts that he must be, at any rate, able to assume the bearing of a gentleman: that while his inches must approach those of John Hennesey, he must have considerable flexibility of voice, and an intimate knowledge of the family's affairs; even as Hennesey said, speaking to his cousin of personal matters which he had believed profoundly secret.

"One thing," he added, "materially increases our difficulty. I am personally a stranger to Mrs. Seymour. If she believed the man talking to Olivia to be her cousin John Hennesey, supposing, that is, that she noticed him at all, she would have some difficulty at this distance of time in establishing any points of difference, especially taking into consideration the change of dress."

Sebright flicked the end of his cigar. "You have positively no suspicions?" he asked.

"None; unless, indeed——"

"What?"

"A supposition so degrading to my cousin, that I could wring the man's neck if it were verified. Servants have opportunities of acquiring knowledge. I gave Lovett a holiday that night (the last of his stay in England) presumably to say farewell to his sweetheart."

"And probably that's what he did. Ah, my dear fellow, you're out of it there. We're too far advanced in the century to be robbed by our servants, we only rob each other. You must look higher than Lovett for the motive and design of a very clever trick."

The next evening saw Mr. Hennesey in the room of Mr. Wilson, who had been recommended by Sebright as the man likely to solve the problem.

The room, an ordinary top-floor back, was scrupulously neat. At his ease in an old leathern arm-chair, sat Mr. Wilson, reading by the light of a solitary candle, robed in a dressing-gown.

Hennesey was not favourably impressed, and remained standing, holding the back of the chair, and looking at the man before him.

It was hardly a countenance to inspire confidence, unless by its inscrutable ugliness. The skin was thick, unhealthy in colour, and flaccid, closely marked with lines which in places deepened until they became suggestive of folds. The eyes, half hidden by the drooping lids and the puckered flesh, shone as mere glittering beads in the heavy, repulsive face.

Mr. Wilson felt his visitor's scrutiny, impeded though it was by the dimness of the light.

"I suppose," he said, in a sulky voice, "you're surprised at having to mount to a three-pair back?"

Hennesey remained silent.

"I pass here for a commercial traveller. I come and go unnoticed, my visitors the same; there's no better place to conduct private and confidential business than a London three-pair back, provided the walls are thick and you don't talk over loud."

During this speech John Hennesey felt that his scrutiny had been lazily returned. His first sense of repugnance deepened, and but for Sebright's recommendation, and the assurance he had that day received from Scotland Yard as to the man's undoubted capacity when he chose to exert himself, instinct would have decided against further transactions. As it was, he sat down and stated the case as briefly as possible. As he proceeded, Mr. Wilson became alert and business-like.

"And on the night in question you remained—where?" was his first query.

"In my own rooms."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

"Ah! I see you were. Perhaps, now, you were playing the violin—something of that sort—that would make your presence known to your neighbours."

Hennesey started. Some idea of the drift of the apparently simple question, of the intent with which those keen eyes were fixed upon his face, crossed his mind; but he felt that hesitancy or anger would be the height of folly.

"I was finishing work for the press. I started for Paris the following morning."

"Yes, and when finished you went upstairs to bed; about what time?"

"I went into the adjoining room to bed at 2.30, my rooms being on the ground floor."

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"Communicating?"

"Yes."

"The other inhabitants of the house—what might they have been about? No one there, I suppose, of whom you may have suspicion?"

"In the house? Certainly not. A barrister, I believe, lived in the rooms above me—a couple of clerks above him. I knew nothing of them, nor they of me."

"They weren't at home on that night?"

"I heard the barrister come in soon after I had gone to bed."

"And the landlady—where was she?"

"She lived, I believe, in the basement and slept in the attic. She brought me hot water, in answer to my ring at 9.30. Half-an-hour later I heard her go upstairs."

"Your servant slept out that night, I think you said?"

"Yes, he had twenty-four hours' leave, as he was leaving England with me the next day."

"Do you mind telling me where he slept?"

"In a small room at the end of the hall, adjoining my bedroom."

Mr. Wilson was growing more and more courteous.

"Excuse me; but a little awkward, was it not," he now said deferentially, "for a gentleman of your habits to dispense with the services of his valet the night before a lengthened absence? Many things must have required attention."

As the suavity of the man increased, Hennesey's temper rose. He left the last question without reply.

"But, of course, that is no business of mine," said Mr. Wilson at last, turning his eyes to the fire. "Facts, though, we are forced to ascertain. That letter, now, can you let me see it?"

"Impossible!"

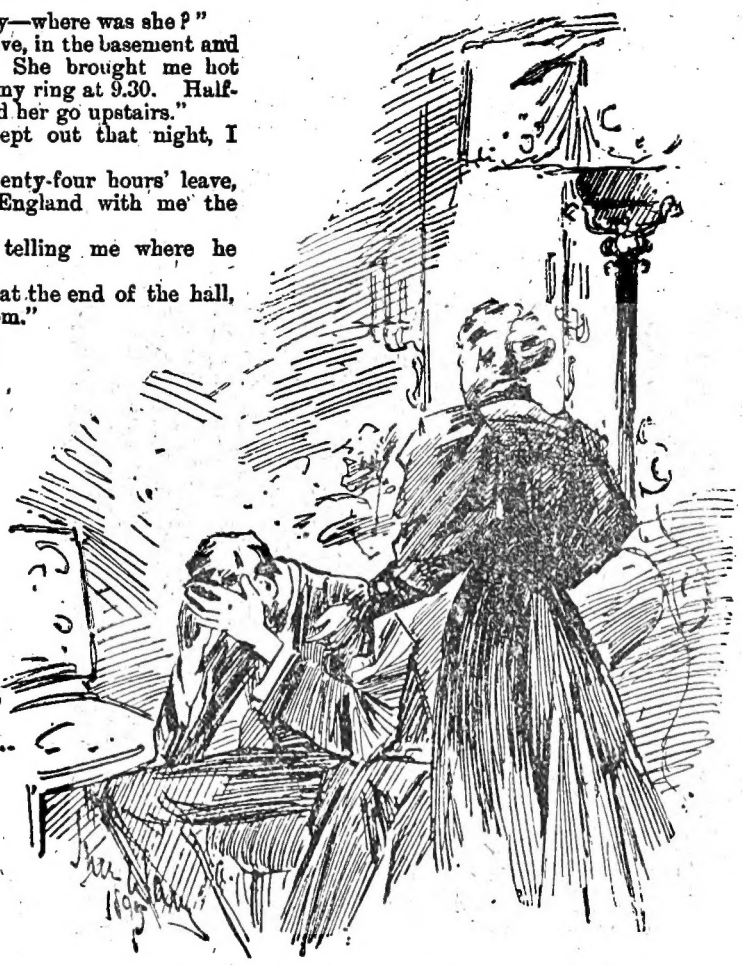
Mr. Wilson raised his eyebrows.

"I might obtain from it most important data."

"I have told you from notes every word that it contains bearing on the case."

Mr. Wilson leant back in his chair with closed eyes.

"Well," he said, in a voice that seemed suddenly dead and muffled, "you might go now. You shall hear from me in three days, that is, on Saturday. There is a candle—be so kind as to light yourself down. Disturbance of the body is fatal to the balance of the mind, as you may know. Good-night."



He sat down like a man utterly perplexed and lost.

John Hennesey's visit to George Street took place on Wednesday evening.

On the afternoon of the following Friday he called to see his half sister, Mrs. Winthrop—the daughter of his mother by an earlier marriage.

Mrs. Winthrop was at her house in Eaton Place for a week or two, on some special business, and, John, hearing of her arrival, lost no time in seeking her. He found her in her drawing-room, gay with roses from Winthrop—and, to his disappointment, not alone. He fancied that he saw a shade of constraint in her greeting, which, in his present mood, chilled and dismayed him.

"I don't think you have ever met Mrs. Hazel, John?"

He turned towards the stranger, whom hitherto he had seen dimly as a dark figure in the window among the flowers, and felt that he was favoured with a rapid, inquisitive glance, which subsided as quickly into indifference. He saw a pretty woman, with the complexion of a young untamed gipsy—warm, glowing, brilliant. Hair soft and brown, full of natural curve and waves, and a childish, plaintive mouth that seemed pleading against something—perhaps too severe criticism of the rather startling and assertive style of beauty for which its owner could hardly be held responsible.

Hennesey had frequently heard of the young widow who, after devotedly nursing Squire Hazel Holt for two years, had been left to freedom and a jointure of £2,000 a year.

The girl of three-and-twenty had seemed honestly to mourn the elderly squire—perhaps she was not without gratitude towards the man who had raised her from the position of his sister's companion to that of mistress of Hazel Holt and life-long independence. But John Hennesey was not favourably impressed. That undeniably assertive flash of colour and effect was prejudicial, and armed him against her.

"I am so glad you have come, Jack," said his sister Margaret, "I am dying to hear the correct and true version of the diamond mystery."

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"Your curiosity sha'l be gratified—in due time."

"Due time—nonsense! At once! Mrs. Hazel is as interested as any of us; she was at the ball and noticed the rose on poor Olivia's gown."

John turned sharply, eyeing the widow with renewed interest.

"Mrs. Hazel was there? Can she throw any light?"

"Not much, I fear, but if you will let us hear your version——"

"The tale is hardly a pleasant one, especially as I have an idea that I have already told it to my own disadvantage, and set a couple of detectives at my heels. I have something more than a suspicion that I have been watched since yesterday morning."

"Oh, Jack, what an abominable thing! You must have some bitter enemy in the background." She glanced nervously at Mrs. Hazel, and the widow flashed back a quick signal in reply.

"At any rate, Mr. Hennesey is safe here from misjudgment," she said warmly. "My desire to hear the story from himself springs from a hope that my memory of that night may be of use in arriving at the truth."

John Hennesey rapidly recounted the events of the past few days, and the two women listened in unbroken silence until he mentioned his visit to Wilson, by Sebright's advice.

"Wilson, 15, George Street, Gray's Inn Road," Mrs. Hazel repeated in some surprise, "and you never heard of him before?"

"Certainly not. Why?"

"Why? oh—why I thought everyone in town had heard of Wilson, the arch-discoverer—the refuge of the scandalous and the scandalised."

"Happily the present is my first appearance in either character," said John coldly.

The widow seemed about to make some further remark, when the sound of a fresh arrival brought an interruption from Margaret.

"John," she said uneasily, "I forgot to tell you—Clem is in town. I hear him coming now—he is in the hall—with Mr. Sebright, I think."

"Clem—in town? Why hasn't he been to see me?"

"Because—but come with me, quick, into the next room. I must speak to you before you meet. Violet, will you take my place?"

She opened a door leading to her private sitting-room, and drew John away, wondering just as those other steps reached the landing.

"John," she said, when they were alone, "I must tell you before you and Clem meet—you will find him in a strange mood—he has had a horrible letter, unsigned, type-written, full of malicious accusations against you, trying to stir him into action against you in his position of legal heir. It has staggered and upset him, but be patient with him—he is so young—inexperienced."

"Good Heavens! Margaret, you can't mean to say that my brother suspects me?"

"He seems under some strange influence—not like himself."

John sat down like a man utterly perplexed and lost—harassed by some new idea, which yet he must reject.

"Margaret," he said at last, "Clem is changed, you say; has it ever occurred to you?"

The sister covered her face with her hands.

"Oh, John, I know what you mean. It is wicked, cruel, yet how can one help thinking! Clem is in debt—he knew everything—you are alike—in voice—in height. I dare hardly think. This very letter may be a part of the plot, an attempt to avert suspicion."

John remained silent some little time.

"Margaret," he said gravely at last, "I trust and believe that the injustice to Clem of our thoughts is as great as the injustice to myself. The boy is misguided, that is all. We had better go back to the drawing-room. You can depend upon me, I shan't quarrel with the lad, whatever folly he may commit."

When they returned to the larger room they found the widow at the tea-table, the lawyer in a state of high complacency, lounging at her side in the most comfortable chair the room afforded, his tea-cup placed within easy reach of his hand.

In spite of his own preoccupation, John found time to feel amused at the expression with which the widow's deep-fringed eyes rested upon the lawyer, and to wonder whether the latter's manifest air of satisfaction and home-like ease in Margaret's drawing-room resulted from the attentions of Mrs. Hazel.

Clem stood upon the hearthrug, looking moodily into his tea-cup, and responded coldly to the greeting of the elder brother.

He was a fairly exact copy of John Hennesey, allowing for the difference in their ages and the downy markings of the upper lip, which with the elder had developed into a thick mous ache.

By tacit consent the subject of the diamonds was avoided. John strove to be cordial, and asked his brother to dine with him that night.

"Thanks, I dine with Margaret," was the curt reply, and soon after he left the house.

John, returning to his hote an hour later, pondered more than the occasion seemed to warrant upon the widow's somewhat sudden and apparent development of interest in Sebright. The offer of possible assistance to himself had not been renewed, and the stories of his troubles had failed to elicit any such signs of personal favour as she had bestowed upon the suave lawyer.

Nearly three weeks passed away and no definite clue to the impersonator of John Hennesey had been discovered.

Under pressure, Olivia's letter had been at length submitted to the police, and the testimony it contained—the absolute conviction of the dead girl regarding the falseness and crime of the man who n she had evidently loved with unchecked fidelity—was felt to be almost conclusive.

Clem's moody bitterness increased; he had received a second warning letter, which, however, contained no hint at blackmailing. Margaret affirmed a belief that he was under some sinister influence; but, if so, he was dumb to all betrayal.

Meanwhile, in spite of the widening of the breach between the brothers, and the undisguised hostility of the younger, John made no effort at reprisals, and gave no hint that might tend to avert suspicion from himself by throwing it upon Clem, yet one or two damaging circumstances came to light.

Clement had been in town at the time of the ball, with the object of borrowing money from Mr. Winthrop to meet some pressing debt, but had urged his sister to keep his visit and his difficulties alike secret from John, whom he knew, he said, to be powerless to help him. Clement had, in fact, been sitting with Margaret when the note came from John, explaining the sudden press of work which would both prevent his dining in Eaton Place and joining Olivia in the evening.

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Winthrop had not had the required £200 to spare at the moment, but had advanced £50, and Margaret had heard no more of the affair.

In the midst of deeper anxieties she could afford to feel annoyed with her friend Violet Hazel, who appeared so ready to outrage all the canons of good taste by an absolute infatuation for William Sebright. She remained in town, prolonging a visit originally intended to be a flying one, long after the end of all ostensible reason. Sebright also stayed, detained by the interests of John Hennesey, and the widow's carriage was constantly to be seen waiting in Bedford Row. Her affairs must have been hitherto in a bewildering state of entanglement—so much explanation and legal assistance seemed suddenly required.

"Heaven knows, that I believe in both my brothers!"

According to Margaret's notions, her friend was doing something more than encouraging a man, who, whatever his professional ability, was an insult to the memory of Squire Hazel, when viewed in the light of a possible successor.

As she sat one morning, expecting the arrival of the widow to luncheon, she pondered over the matter afresh, and determined that she would attempt one word of warning before it should be altogether too late. The expected knock at the door came nearly a quarter of an hour before the time fixed. Two minutes later Mrs. Winthrop found herself greeting Sebright, and feeling really exasperated at an appearance which she thought must be planned.

He looked even more beaming and self-satisfied than usual, and Mrs. Winthrop speedily learnt that any attempt at interference on her part would now be probably worse than useless. Violet Hazel had accepted the lawyer on the previous day; he had called to communicate the fact without delay to one of his oldest friends, and evidently in the express hope of being asked to remain and meet the widow at luncheon.

Margaret submitted with a very bad grace, offered her congratulations and the required invitation with as much amiability as she could master at the moment, and turned the conversation to John's affairs.

Sebright was honestly concerned for the difficulties of his old client, and became once more business-like and alert. He owned that Wilson seemed completely baffled for once.

"You know my devotion to your cause," said the lawyer: "yet you must own that circumstances——"

"Mr. Sebright," said Margaret, rising to her feet in her earnestness, "Heaven knows that I believe in both my brothers! Clem is foolish, but innocent of any guilt greater than his suspicion of his brother, I am convinced. Yet, of the two, sooner he could have done this thing than John, with the great love he bore and still bears for Olivia Hennesey."

A hand was laid upon her shoulder as she ceased speaking, and she turned to find Violet Hazel beside her. The widow had entered unannounced, and unobserved by Margaret, and must have heard her last words. Mrs. Winthrop, turning suddenly, was struck by the unusual pallor and pathos of the beautiful face and her kind heart reproached her. Was Violet already repenting her bargain?

"You startled me, dear," she said kindly. "I did not hear you come in; but you look half frightened yourself. Come and take your bonnet off, and let me give you congratulations, instead of this dismal talk. Mr. Sebright is going to stay to luncheon."

Mrs. Hazel's colour came back to her cheeks, but she did not quite recover her cheerfulness until the luncheon was nearly over, when she suddenly became inordinately gay.

Margaret grew correspondingly repelled, and, so soon as they reached the drawing-room, made some excuse for relieving the lovers of her society.

She remained absent nearly a quarter of an hour. When she returned there seemed some slight embarrassment, suggestive, Margaret thought, of what was under the circumstances an irritating stage of love-making. Mrs. Hazel was stooping ostensibly to recover a handkerchief dropped on the bear-skin rug but, in reality, Margaret thought, to hide some silly girlish confusion. Something she said quickly to Sebright made him desist from a natural and polite effort to assist her, and turn his attention to his hostess.

A moment later Violet Hazel came forward, still with heightened colour. She had in her hand a small flat jeweller's case, in which she had just replaced a sapphire pendant, a present from Sebright, bought that morning in Bond Street. The case had fallen on the bear-skin with the handkerchief when Margaret entered, and the entanglement of the fastening in the long fur had caused slight delay. Now Mrs. Hazel claimed her friend's appreciation of the jewels with an eagerness of delight which Margaret condemned as childish and irksome.

The widow left the house half an hour later with Sebright. From the stairs she ran back to the drawing-room door.

"Margaret, if you are alone to-night I should like to spend the evening with you."

"Come by all means. Sam is obliged to stay at Winthrop, I only did not ask you because——"

"Never mind why, I have asked myself. I, too, shall be alone and I wish to come."

Mrs. Hazel returned to Eaton Place, as she had proposed. During dinner Margaret thought her nervous, but afterwards, in the quiet of the drawing-room, the widow said, breaking a silence that was beginning to be awkward:

"Margaret, I never told you the history of that night of the ball as I knew it. It has been on my mind for some time."

"I understood that there was nothing to tell."

Margaret spoke rather sharply.

"I was on the point of detailing my impressions the afternoon that we were interrupted by Mr. Sebright and

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your brother Clem: afterwards I thought it best to be silent, but I must tell you to-night."

"If there is anything that can harm John—" began Margaret.

"You shall judge. You must hear what I have got to say, sooner or later, if not from me from someone else—so listen.

"When I first saw Olivia Hennesey that night, she was sitting alone in a small sort of ante-room, just a couple of lounges and some ferns in it. She had removed her mask and was leaning back with a strange fixed look upon her face. I thought she was ill, so I asked my partner to fetch an ice and went to her. She said however, that she was perfectly well, and had only come there, as I had done, for cool and quiet.

"Presently, by way of saying something, I remarked; 'I am so sorry your cousin is not coming this evening. It seems fated that I am never to meet him.'

"She looked at me in a surprised sort of way.

"'Who? Jack. Jack is coming.'

"'Margaret told me an hour or two ago that he had sent word it was impossible.'

"'Oh!—a message. Yes, I remember, but he is coming, for all that.' She smiled in such a satisfied, happy way, that I could not help saying: 'Ah, you have had later information?' just laughing a little.

"'No, I have heard nothing; but it is very odd, I know he is coming, I am waiting for him here. Do you never have strange presentiments—intuition?'

"'Very often, and they are invariably wrong.'

"'That will not be the case with mine this evening,' she said, with quiet conviction.

"Just then my partner returned with the ice, and soon after I was obliged to leave her. I thought her mood a strange one; I thought it stranger still, when, half-an-hour afterwards, looking into the ante-room, I saw her talking earnestly with a man in the dress of Romeo. Evidently Mr. Hennesey had come.

"I had no chance of speaking to him, he never left her side; but whenever I could I watched this Romeo with some interest. You had talked so constantly about your Jack, that you had roused my curiosity, and the whole affair struck me as peculiar.

"I had dined with the Sinclairs, and arranged to stay the night, instead of returning to Kensington. The carriage would not hold us all, and Mrs. Sinclair left first, and I with her. On reaching the house she told the coachman to drive back immediately for the rest of the party. I suppose the servants inside had not expected our return so early. At any rate, we were kept waiting a few moments on the step.

"It was a warm night, but dark. We must have been almost hidden by the shadow of the porch. While we stood there a man came up the pavement, and the light from the gas lamp—which did not reach us—fell upon him. He wore a long overcoat and a crush hat, yet the figure struck me as familiar. A hansom was crawling up the street from the opposite direction. He hailed it almost at our doorway; the street to him must have seemed otherwise empty.

"For a moment I saw his face distinctly as he lifted it to give the direction: 15, George Street, Gray's Inn Road. As he raised his arm to throw open the door of the hansom, the cape of the light Inverness fell back, and I further saw Romeo's starched sleeve which had been before my eyes for the last hour. Then I knew why the figure had seemed familiar. Evidently Mr. Hennesey had walked from the Seymours until he met a cab. I thought the address he had given an odd one, and I was disappointed in his face; both dwelt in my memory, also the tone of the voice.

"The incidents of the evening seemed suggestive of a sequel, but none came for some time.

"Mr. Hennesey remained abroad, and Olivia died: then I heard of the loss of the diamonds. Of course I held my tongue, but I came up to London all in the heat really to try and see John Hennesey and satisfy myself as to his identity.

"I did see him here that afternoon; but not until to-day have I been able to prove who the man under the lamp-post really was."

There was a sudden dropping of the sustained tones—a pallor and a drooping of the white lids, as of one who, having reached the end of a painful task, yet sees a sequel full of bitterness.

* * * * *

About the time that Mrs. Hazel reached this point in her narration, John Hennesey and a sergeant of police were mounting the stairs of No. 15, George Street. Hennesey's visit was an appointment of some days standing, made with the avowed intent of forcing the hand of the detective, to whose manipulation of his affairs he greatly attributed the growing hostility of general opinion. The additional presence of the police sergeant was an arrangement of a few hours.

Face to face with Wilson, however, Hennesey's views seemed to have undergone some modification.

He appeared to be in no hurry to bring his charge, and anxious not to raise Mr Wilson's wrath. For the first time he openly expressed doubts regarding Clem, which Wilson listened to with a polite smile of attention.

"You can hardly suppose you are suggesting a new idea to my mind, Mr. Hennesey, or that I have not admired your reticence about suspicions it was impossible for you to avoid. I may tell you that several circumstances have transpired that have an awkward look for your brother; but, naturally, I have felt some delicacy in approaching the subject with you. The temptation was, of course, a great one. The diamonds——"

During this speech the sergeant who had accompanied John had risen from his chair and gone over to the window, which was behind Wilson's chair, as though suffering from the sultry heat of the night.

A sharp turn brought him up close to the private detective, who was sitting easily, his arms resting on the sides of the chair. The sergeant suddenly leant forward and seized him a little above the wrists with a grip which made Wilson writhe round in a blaze of wrath and astonishment that yet seemed tinged with alarm.

"That's all very fine talking, Lawyer Sebright, but I shall have to trouble you to come along with me presently on account of those same diamonds which you know more about than either of the Mr. Henneseys, and wash that face of yours."

The man, pinioned in his chair, tried to struggle to his feet, but the sergeant had the advantage both in position and muscle.

"Come, now, don't," said he, unmoved and calm. "Don't ye force me to put them persuaders on. You're a clever fellow—clever as ever I did see, but the game's up, and swearin' won't help ye. Mr. Hennesey's here; he was only leadin' you on, bless you! just to keep you suspectin', and see how far you would go. I've a mate outside. I always did think that mug of yourn were plaster of Paris, but so long as you did our work and acted on the square it worn't no matter of consequence."

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This speech was naturally spasmodic, in spite of the unemotionalism, owing to the struggles of the writhing figure in the chair. At its close the figure grew still; defeat was with it, and despair.

"Tell me," he said, "how have you hunted me down?"

The voice was no longer muffled, and its familiarity coming from the painted mask, struck painfully upon the heart of the man who had been wronged.

"Well, if you're bent on knowing," said the sergeant, "it was the lady as did it. She showed us the trick of that nice little safe of yourn."

There was a sharp cry of rage and pain, the first and last sign of weakness that Sebright showed.

* * * * *

"That he was not Mr. Hennesey I felt convinced that first afternoon," Mrs. Hazel was saying.

"Oh, Violet! And you have been silent all this time, when a word——"

"Be quiet. What proof had I but the cut of a sleeve seen in the dark? But to-day—only to-day—I have proved not only who the man was, but his identity with Romeo."

Margaret was struck with a fear hardly less alarming than that which she had just escaped, and which made further questioning impossible. She remained silent—waiting.

"He was Wilson, the detective," Mrs. Hazel said, still with that touch of final resignation.

Mrs. Winthrop was entirely taken aback. After the first throb of intense relief this seemed the wildest hypothesis, and untenable. Her mind could seize no line of connection with this man.

"Can't you see the deduction?" Mrs. Hazel went on. "Wilson stole the diamonds. Wilson, to avert suspicion, has secretly helped to keep it alive against Mr. Hennesey; he was probably the sender of the typewritten letters, and Wilson was recommended by Sebright."

"They are in collusion, then? Oh, my poor Violet!"

"They are one and the same. As you said yourself, the secret has been too well kept for more than one to be in it. As for me, why do you pity me? My own fear has been that I should overdo my part, that you would find me out. I was angry sometimes that you should think I should care."

Slowly Margaret realised the truth.

"Remember your own words, Margaret. Surely no cost is too great to save an innocent man and an honourable name. And I resolved to save your brother if I could. When Sebright came into the room that first day I recognised him. I led Sebright to say the address in George Street and any doubt I might have had was removed. Still I had no proof. I fooled and flattered him to the top of his bent, hoping to lead him to commit himself, but he was too clever for that. Then I led him to think that I was in love with him, and used my poor money as a bait. I soon found that he had considerable influence over Clem, and had lent him money, having him to some extent in his power.

"I grew very anxious to see Wilson, and wrote once or twice to appoint an interview. The detective was coy, and not anxious for the test; but I succeeded at last by intimating that I had important secret information to impart upon the Hennesey case. Then he called upon me at dusk. I had the lamps lit, and while he was there, moved one, and on some excuse raised the shade; but I frankly own that I gained nothing—the disguise baffled me.

"You can imagine that I was careful in what I said. I merely insisted on my conviction that John Hennesey, and no one else, had been at the ball and stolen the diamonds; but I think my friend was a little disappointed at the lack of anything that could be called evidence. He said, of course, that he had hoped to hear something that might tend to clear Mr. Hennesey.

"I began to see that my only chance was to get at Sebright's papers. At this stage I went to Scotland Yard and reported my impressions. I don't think they were taken very seriously; but as a result detectives were put on to watch Sebright and Wilson. And the counter suspicion delayed, I think, Mr. Hennesey's arrest. Of course, it was so manifestly impossible that I might be mistaken in everything but the address given by the man under the gas lamp, that the story was not held sufficient warrant for immediate official measures, and it rested with me to prove it. Wilson's transformations were so cleverly managed that up to yesterday his identity had not been established; from what I could gather there was a point of disappearance, where so far he had eluded all vigilance.

"In my visits to Bedford Row I noticed a portable iron safe fastened with a Chubb's patent, the key of which was never out of Sebright's possession. I made all sorts of plans for getting hold of that key. I even descended to a promise of marriage, and then chance favoured me. I asked him last night to bring me some of a particular kind of bonbon, and to-day he was so infatuated that he let me search for them in his coat pockets, knowing that I should find the sapphires. Of course, I stole the key, slipped it up my wide linen cuff, sheltered by the lapel of his coat.

"He carried it always in a small breast-pocket, with a note-book.

"In case he should miss it before leaving, I shook it down into the fur rug. Naturally, it was most important that he should not suspect me. I covered it afterwards, while you and he were talking. He had an appointment in West Kensington—a will case which I knew would occupy him for some hours, for he had told me about it. Directly he left me I ordered a carriage and drove to Bedford Row.

"He had a habit of never saying at the office the exact hour of his return, thinking this had a beneficial effect on the industry of his two clerks; and his caution now served me in good stead.

"I told the clerks that I had an appointment with their master at half-past four—that he would certainly return to keep it. They were so accustomed to see me there, treated as Sebright's most honoured client, that not the slightest demur was made at showing me to his private room.

"Once there, the door shut, the rest was easy.

"In my own mind I had arranged that should I fail to find anything compromising I would at once return to you and replace the key in the fur rug—where, when Sebright missed it, it would be found. I unlocked the safe, trembling with anxiety lest I should be discovered. At first I found only deeds and legal documents, coupons, securities—nothing bearing upon the case.

"But on opening one drawer, I saw a packet of letters addressed to Wilson, 15 George Street; almost at the top were my own, with pencilled notes written across which I dared not stay to read. Beneath I found a small sealed parcel, some jeweller's instruments, and some scraps of filagree gold, like that used in the leaves of the rose, also half-a-dozen letters written in cipher, and all bearing the post-mark of Amsterdam.

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"Stowed away underneath was a small book of notes in Sebright's handwriting. It was just a series of remarks and memoranda, and I saw enough towards the end to assure me that I had succeeded. I fancy that book will afford some curious revelations.

"I quickly replaced everything. Then rang the bell and told the clerk I could wait no longer, something unexpected must have detained Mr. Sebright. I was sitting over by the window then, looking at the *Times*. I was bowed out and drove at once to the nearest office to wire to Scotland Yard. Within twenty minutes a detective arrived.

"Sebright had not returned. I gave up the key and left the man in possession. *Voilà tout*, I had a cup of tea, dressed, and came here."

Mrs. Winthrop would not let her friend leave her that night.

They were both nervous and overwrought. Margaret excited and thankful, yet feeling as a reproach her want of spontaneous gratitude, her inner shrinking from the part the widow had played. She wished that her husband was in town, or that John would come to relieve her of the burden, and supply her deficiencies.

John did not appear until the following morning. Then, if he felt critical over the audacity that had saved him, he was careful not to show it. Mrs. Hazel could have no reason to complain of the warmth of his recognition and gratitude, yet she was cross and almost rude in her disclaimers.

The trial of Sebright was effectually a *cause célèbre*. The Hennesey diamonds were found almost intact, he having been afraid to hurry them into the market.

It was from Clem, on the very afternoon of the ball, that Sebright had learnt that John would be unable to keep his engagement, and other particulars needful to the scheme for obtaining the diamonds which he quickly perfected. He owned that the idea had been spontaneous—springing from opportunity.

John caused the rose to be re-fashioned, and the diamonds re-set; but for a while it seemed probable that in his lifetime no woman would have the right to wear them.

After the excitement of the trial, Violet Hazel fell ill, and Margaret persuaded her to spend the winter with her in the South of France. Mrs. Winthrop had long since ceased to criticise her friend; both women were glad to escape notoriety and gossip; and Margaret, watching the widow's softened beauty, and shy, timid ways, wondered over her; and pondered to find the motive power that had transformed her into the daring heroine of an ugly adventure, formed her own conclusions.

"I wish John would marry," she said suddenly one day; "it is bad for the estate, for the family, especially bad for Clem."

Mrs. Hazel had risen, and was staring out of the window.

"What of the memory, Margaret; and your own words—the great love he bore, and still bears, for Olivia Hennesey! Who is worthy to succeed her?"

Margaret rose and put her arm about her friend's neck.

"Violet, I think that Olivia's answer to that question would be, the woman who saved John's honour and good name."

All the world said this would be a fitting ending to the romance, yet John himself was slow to see it.

Mrs. Winthrop tried gently to enlighten him, with results which were not unsatisfactory to those chiefly concerned.

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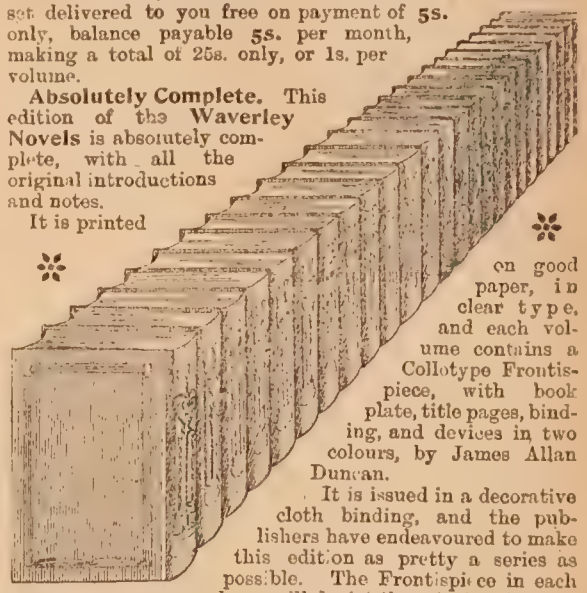

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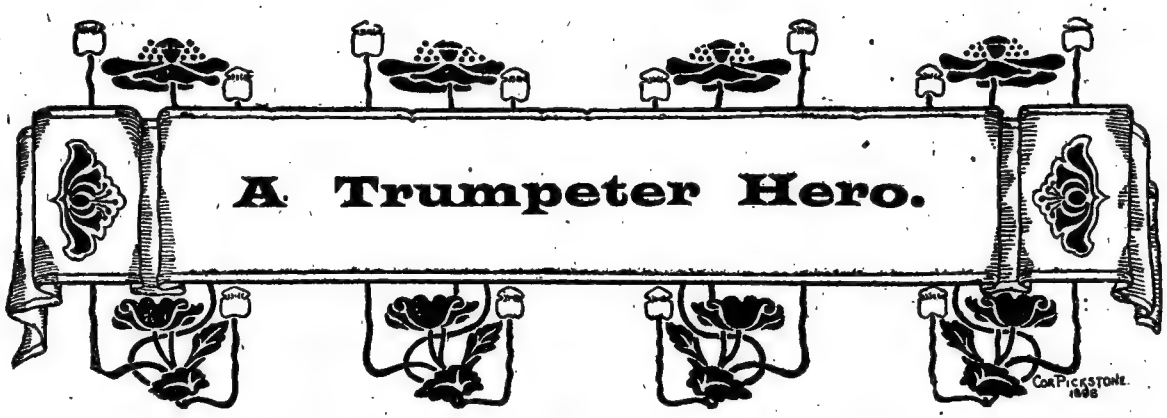
A Trumpeter Hero.



He was under an unlucky star, this handsome trumpeter, this Jean Blouart, as he called himself, or Victoire, as his comrades called him. And everything smiled upon him in his little world; no one could sound the reveillé as loud, as long, or as joyously as he could sound it, and they were always able to recognise him, no matter how great the distance, by his alert and decided step.

He played it well, that loud-tongued clarion, for Victoire was a true musician, who had spent his childhood listening to the birds and fashioning, when guarding his flocks in the beautiful country of Touraine, strange instruments from the barks of the willows, to mingle their shrill or mellow notes with the thousand-and-one voices of Nature.

Naturally he was happy now that he possessed a real instrument, and every evening during his life in the garrison, and when the duties of the day were done, went to exercise it upon the banks of the Orne and to hear the echoes carried by the wind and reverberating from tower to tower of those grey old churches of Caen.

It was the hour of sunset, however, that Jean Blouart liked best of all, when the voices of the bells flung themselves into space in a gigantic concert, at first a soft, vague harmony, like a rocking cradle, then mounting and resounding tones, ringing and chiming and dying away upon the evening breeze, note by note, like the dropping pearls of a necklace.

Jean Blouart remained always a long while listening to this heavenly music, and from time to time adding to the melody a long and rolling blast from his own instrument.

In fact, he had had but one sorrow in the whole of his life—the leaving behind him in that same country of Touraine his old father, already far advanced in age and alone in that desolate dwelling. He consoled himself, however, with the reflection that time passed quickly, and that now but two years remained to him of service.

And sometimes, while listening to the voices of these bells, Jean Blouart fancied them the Angelus of his native village, and saw before him the humble cabin surrounded by its green trellises, and with the old father smoking upon the door-step. But he was only twenty-two years of age, this handsome Victoire, and at that age, as everyone knows, everything seems so very gay and so very easy.

Besides, garrison life was full of distractions—talks with his comrades, meetings with the other buglers, the morning reveillé, the evening retreat, the passage through the crowded street, the blonde heads of the peeping demoiselles, and the rest under the shade of the trees when the exercises were over.

The days were truly going at a racing pace when one morning, as Jean Blouart got up as usual to sound the reveillé, he found that war had been declared.

* * * * *

They had been fighting all day long. Already the sun was low upon the horizon, and still they battled, for both sides had sworn to conquer, and no one dreamt of recoiling. And the trumpet rolled and cried its stirring music, sending its inspiring notes into the very heart of the *mêlée*, mingling its voice with the fracas of the cannon, the screaming of the balls, and the shouts and groans of the combatants.

Jean Blouart was always to the front, dragging at his heels the soldiers drunk with carnage and grimed with powder. They fought now hand to hand and body to body, Victoire, as if determined to justify the name his friends had given him, and, like a horse that has run away, literally throwing himself upon the enemy, still sounding the charge without relaxing.

All at once Jean Blouart saw no more about him the uniforms of the French regiments; instead, before him, behind him, upon every side of him, there rose a solid rampart of the opposing forces, a living wall of flesh and bayonets, through which he sought in vain to make a passage. Guns turned upon him from every direction, swords pricked him in the arm, the face, the sides—he had flung himself into the trap; it had closed upon him—he was a prisoner.

* * * * *

The sun no longer lighted the desolate country; night slowly descended from the heavens; the struggle for the moment was finished. Blouart, still a prisoner, walked in the midst of the encompassing soldiers, and saw as in a dream defiling before him the fields, the hills, and sombre forests. He walked mechanically, and always in his ears the fracas of that ended battle.

Before long they halted in the shelter of the forest, and lighted the camp fires. The flames cast a sinister light upon the trunks of the trees; the trumpeter threw himself upon the ground, and, overcome by fatigue, slept and dreamt.

A scene in his childhood. The sun shines, the birds sing blithely in the hedges, and he sees again his beloved home; this time his mother seated at the window spinning at her wheel. And he? Well he, a soldier then as now, has just arrived from school, a soldier three feet high, proud as a peacock, and with a splendid gun

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plucked from the hazel tree, borne upon his shoulder.

Suddenly a passing dog upon the highway stops to bark at him; he shrieks and runs with all his legs to bury his head in the lap of his mother.

"For shame!" she cries, "for shame, my boy! A true soldier runs from nothing!"

A true soldier runs from nothing! It seemed to Blouart that a voice repeated that in his ear. He rose quickly and looked about him. Everything slept beside him; everything slept in the silent forest. Even the step of the sentinel was dulled by the moss. The heavens, resplendent with stars, shone between the branches of the trees, and the breeze that always heralds the dawn came to his nostrils freighted with the perfume of the peaceful wood. Victoire passed his hand across his brow. He remembered now—he was a prisoner. He must rouse himself; he must save himself, or he must die. But he was watched; he could not stir.

The hours passed, the horizon widened, and he saw a road winding along the side of the forest, above him a chain of timbered hills. The road ascended abruptly. Beside it was a ravine, at the bottom of it a roaring torrent, and they gave the signal of departure. This time, however, it was not Victoire who gave it; no, and sorrowfully he regarded his silent instrument, henceforth dumb and voiceless.

A mad desire to die, to end everything, had seized upon him, but "a true soldier runs from nothing." The words persistently resounded in his ears, and he walked away between two soldiers who never took their eyes from him. No matter, the precipice was there beside him; it was deliverance; it was also death. No matter, again.

Victoire plunged forward; there was a cry, a crash, and the soldier at the edge of the abyss had disappeared into its depths. Blouart leapt at the same time—too late, a hand of iron had closed upon his arm, and the muzzle of a pistol pressed his brow. He thought of his father, alone, without a son, without love or care, and ending his days in tears over his desolate life. Jean Blouart no longer had the courage to die.

Meanwhile the officer in command had run forward and ordered the weapons to be lowered.

"Down with them!" he cried; "down with them *at once*! No harm must be done the prisoner!"

"No harm? Then what more terrible suffering," thought Blouart, as he heard him, "had they yet in store for him?"

And now the sun illumined the hills and valley. Along the roadway the oaks and beeches extended their nervous arms, from each leaf hanging a drop of dew, from each leaf a diamond, and all was brilliant and animated under the dazzling sky that gave them light and life.

But Victoire saw nothing of that which surrounded him. What to him was the splendour of Nature—to him, with anguish in his soul? Still he was young, his career before him; oh, no! one thing was certain, Victoire no longer desired to die!

Presently the top of the hill was gained, and the commanding officer again approached Blouart and ordered his hands to be untied.

"For now," he said to him, drawing him forward to the crest of the knoll, "you are going to sound your trumpet here where they can see you, those men below there in the plain—soldiers whom you are going to rally. When you have sounded as I bid you, freedom is yours!"

"And what soldiers are they?" asked Victoire quietly.

"What matters it to you?" coldly responded the officer. "*You* will do as I bid you or you are a dead man!"

And Blouart saw for a fact the muzzles of the guns menacingly trained upon him, and then the men about him were gone from sight, concealed in the bushes at the sides of the route.

"Sound!" cried the officer's voice; "sound, I command you! And you, you others, fire if he does not obey me!" and the answering click of the triggers was plainly audible in the stillness.

Victoire raised the trumpet to his lips, then lowered his eyes to the field below him, where in a little depression of the ground he saw a small encampment of men and horses—an encampment unmistakably of the French.

He knew at last what they meant him to do. They intended, those people who had taken him prisoner, to draw them into an ambuscade, and he, in his uniform, and he, with his music, was to serve to this end.

"Play! Play, I tell you!" cried again the implacable voice.

And Blouart held the clarion to his lips and did begin to play, the joyous notes of the instrument ringing through the air like a merry song, but to Victoire like a cry of desolation and of death.

Still he played on, and the camp beneath him began to be agitated. They saw him, this friend that called to them from the heights above, and whom they gazed upon and whom they recognised with so much pride. He played on, and they, his people, began to move towards him; played with all his skill and strength, the notes following precipitately one upon the other, or with long and joyous rolls.

All at once, down in that little valley, a bell began to strike—a bell that was counting the hour of twelve. A veil of blood passed suddenly before Victoire's eyes; he heard anew in those muffled tones the Angelus of his Touraine village, the bells of Caen, and saw again the walk of chestnut trees, his cabin home, his father, and his beloved France, the France which now he was betraying!

Instead of sacrificing life and of yielding up his last drop of blood for her, he was willing to ruin her, helping her to die, and calling his comrades, his own blood brothers, to an ambuscade and to a shameful death.

In short, he, Jean Blouart, whose eyes had never fallen before the eyes of another, was a traitor to his country! And every rustle of the leaves, every twitter of the birds in the branches, every stroke of that distant but resounding bell, cried out to him the same thing:

"Traitor! traitor!"

He dropped his trumpet.

"Sound, I command you, sound again!" called that pitiless voice.

"Sound again!" began Blouart, but stopped abruptly; a thought had come to him. "Sound again? Yes, yes," he responded, "I am going to sound again!" and with all the strength that remained to him, all the pride and courage of his honest heart, he raised the bugle to his lips and sent forth, first, the wild, fierce notes of the call to arms, the alert, and the quick retreat. Far and wide the trumpet's voice rang through the air, and then there was a rattling volley, a shower of balls, and Victoire, the trumpeter, face downwards upon the ground, was dead!

E. H. POSENER.

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A LAWYER'S ADVICE.

EDWARD BRETT was a bachelor. In one sense this fact added to his philosophical resignation of mind concerning his lack of clients. In another sense, it kept him in an unenviable frame of mind because he was denied, through his impecunious condition, the luxury of a wife and home.

Brett was always of a domestic temperament, fond of home comforts and caring little for the amusements that appeal to most men of his age. Still, if he were unable to keep up an establishment worthy of such a woman as he would choose for his wife, and worthy of his own personal dignity, it were better to remain single.

It was years since he had been called to the Bar, and, in reality, it did begin to look a little dark for his future prospects that business with him did not begin to pick up a little.

There was Jack Erwin, who had been at school with him—a few years of struggling in his chosen profession, medicine, and then unbounded success from every point of view; he had grown immensely wealthy, had married and settled down, so Brett had heard.

One morning in August, Brett was stretched out at full length on the leathern covered lounge with a cushion beneath his head, smoking a cigar and trying to forget his troubles, when there came a tap upon the door marked "Private."

He sprang up from his recumbent posture, laid down his cigar, and proceeded to open the door. As he did so his eyes rested upon the supple figure of a gracefully-formed young woman, who answered his polite greeting, and, advancing into the room, cast herself into the chair Brett indicated, glancing up at him with a little flash of coquetry in her look as she did so. He seated himself opposite her and waited for her to state her errand.

She was inclined to be very coolly deliberate, and bore his scrutinising gaze with marked self-possession, as she drew forth her card case, extracted a card therefrom, and daintily tendered it. He took the card and read "Elsie Manfield."

"You are Mr. Edward Brett, I presume?" she asked in a well-modulated, musical voice.

Brett courteously bowed assent.

"At your service. What can I do for you?"

She fixed her eyes on his face with a keen, searching look.

"I came to consult with you concerning a most important matter. I hope I do not intrude!"

"My time is entirely disengaged," replied Brett in his most amiable tones, "and I shall be most happy to advise you to the best of my ability."

She blushed faintly and prettily as she gracefully inclined her head, and Brett felt his heart give one or two sudden bounds.

"It is a perplexing subject," she began, a slight shadow crossing her face, "and I scarcely know what to say first."

Her hesitation gave Brett an opportunity to take a more leisurely glance at the lady's personality without appearing to so do, as her eyes were downcast.

She was young, not more than eighteen, and a pure blonde, with those exceedingly rare dark, velvety eyes and lashes that are seldom met with, but that accentuated her beauty greatly. Her figure was full-rounded, with graceful curvings, and her features were small and of cameo-like delicacy and as clear-cut. Her attire, together with the appearance of several costly rings upon her small and shapely hands, indicated wealth, and already visions of a liberal fee flitted before Brett's mental vision.

"I wish I could help you; perhaps the best way will be to plunge into the subject, stating the simple facts as plainly as possible," Brett ventured, with a smile of polite encouragement.

"Very true," she murmured, "if I but knew how. It is in reference to a will, and also to a very perplexing and annoying position in which I am placed relative to that will. You will understand the annoyance and my perplexity when I have proceeded further with my story. I am but a woman, with all a woman's frailty and helplessness to combat the cruel scheming and greed of those who are so placed as to be able to show their power over me."

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Here the fair head drooped, and the dark eyes dimmed with tears, but these signs of emotion passed after a moment, and she continued:

"To tell you all I have been forced to suffer and endure would be impossible. You want the plain facts as briefly as I can give them to you.

"Not long since a near relative died, leaving a large fortune. I became chief beneficiary under his will, being the only person having any claim upon the deceased while living. This relative was always of eccentric disposition, and was fond of imposing difficult conditions upon people who sought his favour.

"Particularly disagreeable did he grow to be in all his associations with me, and to crown his peculiar whims he made certain conditions in his will whereby I must marry before August 30th of the present year, or forfeit the greater part of the fortune. In case of my forfeiture the money will go to another.

"Those are the main facts in the case." A rosy blush suffusing her cheeks, "what would you advise me to do? You can readily understand my anxiety, Mr. Brett," imploringly, with the dark eyes upturned to his.

"The 30th of August! The present month, and—why the thirtieth falls on—the thirtieth is to-morrow!" Brett gasped in amazement.

She nodded her head childishly, and drew forth from a small silk hand-bag a roll of parchment and handed it to Brett. "That is a copy of the will; please read it and tell me if there is any way out of this terrible difficulty."

Mr. Edward Brett unfolded the document and glanced carefully over the contents, his professional eye instantly comprehending its import, which was to the effect that the property willed to his would-be client was valued at £100,000, and the conditions imposed were that the girl and the property should be under the authority of guardians until she came of age, or until she married, in which case she must marry before August the thirtieth of present year or forfeit the estate.

Brett folded the document when he had finished reading it, and reflected. The girl had already told him she was but eighteen. He was a pretty good judge of a person's age by the appearance of the person, yet, in the case of women it is more difficult to form correct estimates. He glanced at her casually and placed her age at about twenty-four. Of course, she had told him correctly, however, there was no motive for deception in the matter.

Another fifteen minutes passed in the asking of questions relative to the conditions of the will, and they conversed for some time regarding it.

Brett could see but one way for his fair client to get out of her difficulties, but it was natural that the suggestion of that solution should be embarrassing to him.

He reflected again. The young lady's countenance betrayed extreme anxiety and agitation. Brett hesitated and then said, taking out his watch and glancing at it:

"It is now three o'clock. To-day is the last day."

A moan broke from the lips of the girl, "Oh, what shall I do, Mr. Brett—what *must* I do?"

"I see but one way out of it," he ventured. "I am a business man, my methods are business methods, understand; you came to me for counsel, and, unpleasant as my advice may be to meet, I advance it as comprehending and solving your rather remarkable situation——"

"And that advice is—" she broke in impulsively, "to——"

"To get married," Brett replied calmly.

"To get married!" she gasped, "but how can I? I have no one of whom I have ever thought of in that light, I——"

"My dear young lady, this is not a time for consideration of the matter from a romantic standpoint; it seems to call for very active measures in a very brief space of time."

He was slowly pacing the floor. Her eyes followed his every movement with nervous anticipation. She seemed to be trying to make up her mind to some action on her own part. She hesitated, a deep crimson blush mantling her cheek, then rose and advanced timidly towards him:

"Mr. Brett."

He cast a quick, questioning glance at her. She stood before him confusedly, the words she was trying to speak dying away upon her lips. It was becoming a painful ordeal for Brett, and he wished himself well out of the strange position he was being placed in.

"Won't you sit down here while we think matters over a little more?" he suggested, leading her to a chair by the window and seating himself close by her. Her agitation was apparent. Brett began to suspect that she had a suggestion which she did not quite like to offer after all.

"You won't, I beg, think badly of me," she began confusedly, "but—but—you see, it's this way. If I don't marry, somebody else will get the property?"

"Exactly," promptly assented the lawyer.

"And—I—I—don't want them to."

"Naturally enough."

"And I don't even know any gentlemen whom—whom I ever thought of marrying, except one, and he——"

"Except one. Ah, there is one, then! Have you known him long?" asked Brett, with increasing curiosity.

"No; only—only a *very* short time," she answered, her eyes dropping to the little chatelaine watch guard at her belt.

"Has he ever proposed marriage to you?"

"No, that's just it. *I* couldn't ask *him*, you know."

"Do you care for him?"

"I'm afraid—I do," she replied shyly, the blush on her cheek growing painfully hot and crimson.

She gave one swift, upward glance at Brett, and then her eyes fell again. That glance was an almost paralysing revelation to Edward Brett. He felt as if he were stifling for an instant, his heart seemed to suddenly stop beating and stand still. She saw that his lips had grown pale and were twitching nervously. He reached out his hand toward her with an impulsiveness that astonished himself:

"Miss Manfield, I love you. Will you marry me?"

A little sigh came from the girl's lips; a pallor swept over her face.

"You—surely—you do not mean it," she said. "How can you love me, me, whom you have never before seen?"

"It does look very much as if I were taking advantage of your helpless situation, but I am sincere in what I say. In this last brief hour I have learnt to love you. It seems strange to you, no doubt, but an irresistible attraction drew me to you from the first. I would not have dared presume to tell you this for many months to come, had not the conditions, that seemed so unfavourable to you, proved so auspicious to the love that possessed my heart at first sight, yet, if you cannot return that love, I swear to you never to betray the trust imposed in

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me. Should you marry me, that being a way out of your difficulties, you need not fear that I will in any way forfeit the confidence reposed in me."

"I know—oh, I know. I have already learnt your kindness. I cannot tell you more than I have already. That is not all the story, however; you ought to know it all, and then—"

"Never mind the rest; it can wait. I know enough. Can you trust me?" He held out his hands to her. She stood there before him, superb in her beauty.

"May Heaven help me," she said, with a little sob. "Yes, I do trust you. I will marry you. You will find me in my hotel at two this afternoon. You may come for me there."

Then the door closed and Brett was alone—alone to think over what had passed and ask himself if he were dreaming.

* * * * *

They were just returning from the registry office where the ceremony had taken place. Brett could not realize it all.

His head was in a whirl, and his heart was beating tumultuously.

He seemed suddenly to have lost his senses, to have taken up his being in another world. At length he found voice and spoke to her.

"I must leave you at your hotel and take the afternoon express for Bridgeton. A letter received from there demands my presence there to-morrow. Upon my return I will call on you and learn how further I may serve you. Be perfectly easy. Do not worry. Although speaking hastily, too hastily, in making an avowal of my love, let it be forgiven me inasmuch as I was sincere; that cannot prevent me being a steadfast friend to you, but I shall never obtrude myself upon you. Always remember that whenever you may need me I shall come to you."

She heard the half-sob in his throat as he spoke. She knew then, that, strange as it might be, he loved her.

"You will hear from me as soon as you return," she said simply.

The carriage had drawn up before the hotel; he had accompanied her to the ladies' reception room. He held out his hand in good-bye, and as she laid hers in his strong clasp her eyes met his for one brief instant, then fell before what she saw in them.

Her heart rebelled in one strange cry against this parting, and the sweet sensation of a still stranger love swept over her as, with clasped hands, they stood almost heart to heart; strangers, and yet husband and wife.

* * * * *

It was ten o'clock on the morning after Brett's strange bridal when he reached James and Burleigh's offices and was ushered into the private office of Mr. Burleigh, and that gentleman plunged immediately *in medias res:*

"You see we've just got round to this business of Erwin's—the late John Erwin, you know—schoolfellow of yours some years since. You know all about it, of course?"

"Erwin—Jack Erwin? Is he *dead?* It can't be!" ejaculated Brett, at a loss to comprehend what Burleigh was saying.

"Certainly—thought you were aware of the facts, of course; and, as I remarked before, we've been so very busy, we've just got to the will, you know. The matter has been in our hands for the last year, but slight complications having arisen, we have been all this time trying to get as far as the will. You are chief executor. He leaves his widow about £100,000. You know his wife, I presume—she was Miss Manfield—Elsie Manfield, and—why, what's the matter, man, are you ill? Here, sit here, and I'll get you a glass of brandy. Vertigo, I presume. Used to have bad attacks of that myself some years ago. Don't you call that pretty fair brandy?

"Well, as I was saying, Erwin married Miss Manfield—fine girl.

"Erwin was madly in love with his wife, and left her everything unconditionally, and—ah, excuse me for a moment—be back in a moment," as a call came from Mr. James summoning him into his office.

Brett finished his business with James and Burleigh in time to catch a late train back. When he reached his rooms, he received a letter that had arrived the evening before. Brett broke the seal and read the closely written page of large-sized note paper. It was from—his *wife.*

Brett felt as if he had assumed the identity of some other man, for he could scarcely recognise himself in the *rôle* of bridegroom as his eyes fell upon the first words of the letter:

MY OWN HUSBAND.—How strange it seems to write the words! How strange it will seem to you to read them! I scarcely know how to gain the courage to come to make the confession I must make; and still more do I wonder how I ever dared to take the step I did in regard to our marriage.

You said you loved me. I could hardly believe it possible that that for which I had prayed had come to pass; and yet some strange, strange influence has been drawing us together for years, yes, years. Before this time you have learnt a part of the truth: that I am the widow of Jack Erwin, your old schoolfellow. How often I have heard him talk of you and your college days together, and how little he knew what strange, strange fate was even then at work bringing us toward each other slowly but surely.

You have learnt this much from the lawyers, that he left all his money to me, *unconditionally.* And now comes my confession.

Edward, my husband, first of all let me tell you that longer than I dare acknowledge it to have been, longer than I dare remember, I have loved you with a blind, unreasoning, but pure love. I saw you but once, years ago, long before I married Jack, and at that one sight of your face I loved, I dare not say how much. You never even saw me, that you remember, before yesterday. I married Jack and tried to make him happy, and, I think succeeded. I never expected to meet you upon earth, but I could never have forgotten your face. It has haunted me through all these years.

Jack died, and I mourned him sincerely, but my sorrow and loneliness only revivified the love for you that I had tried to bury. I did not know how to reach you, or what to say to you after having found you, that would explain the state of my feelings, and yet not place me in an unwomanly light in your eyes, until the idea of writing out a false will occurred to me, and so I trumped up the story of my property and self being under guardianship, of my having to marry before a certain date, and all the rest of it. I *thought* you would do just as you did; you see I presupposed your chivalry, and everything worked beautifully! I have obtained through strategy the man I love, but you have acknowledged that you love me; you can't deny it!

I never would dare talk as I am writing, but love makes us bold. Can you forgive your wife's duplicity for the sake of the cause?—Yours for ever, ELSIE.

Mrs. Edward Brett, whose husband almost idolises her, by the way, often laughingly declares that, as far as her experience goes, consulting a lawyer is very expensive business, as she herself once gave £100,000 for a bit of legal advice. S. BAILEY.

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Mohammed Ben Ali Fallen Among Thieves.

MOHAMMED Ben Ali to Ismail Mustapha, love that dieth not and greetings of great joy.

Behold, the wisdom of the land of sand and pomegranates hath stood me in great stead this day; whereof, I now sit me down to write unto thee the true and touching story. To-day I was walking in the street called Broad, because it is so narrow and crowded, when a benevolent-looking stranger, with a long, white beard, accosted me, saying:

"Hullo! Sheik Abdallah, how are you?"

"I am not the Sheik Abdallah," said I, "and I marvel that thou didst ever hear of him. I am simply Mohammed Ben Ali, a merchant of Bagdad."

"I beg your pardon," he said; "but you look just like the Sheik Abdallah, who used to travel with Barnum, many years ago."

I passed on, and had gone but a few yards when another benevolent looking stranger, wearing a large black moustache and a great diamond, accosted me, with a kindly smile, saying:

"Why, I am sure this must be the great Mohammed Ben Ali, of Bagdad."

"That is true," said I; "but how didst thou know it?"

"My friend, Boswell Poor, travelled in the East, and met you in Bagdad. If you will come round to my office, I'll send for him."

Now, Son of the Nightingale, my memory recalled no such man, but I thought it best to go. He took me through many streets, and at last to a small, poorly-lighted room, where we found another man sitting.

"Where's Boswell?" asked this man.

"I don't know," said my new friend, turning in his seat; "let us send for him."

So saying, he went to the door, and called in a loud voice into the hallways:

"John, go and tell Mr. Poor to come round at once."

I saw no boy in the hall as we entered, and when he had called, he closed the door and locked it. I was now suspicious, and I obtained possession of the key by means which thou knowest. My new friend sat down and whistled. Suddenly he said to the man at the table, as if by sudden inspiration:

"I say, Jim, shall we have a little game while we wait for Boswell?"

"I'll go you," said the other.

Then he produced some cards, and, selecting three, one of which was an ace, by a dexterous movement of the hands, spread them out, face downwards on the table. My friend bet a sovereign he could pick out the ace, and he promptly did so. This was repeated several times, and then, seeing that it was what they desired, I offered to bet.

The man with the cards distributed them clumsily, so that I could easily see which was the ace, and I won. This was repeated thrice. Then the man with the cards appeared to lose his temper, and bet me five that I could not do it the next time. Now, oh, Nephew of the Pomegranate, did I, as we are in the habit of saying in the mosque, scent the rodent; but knowing that I possessed all the magic of our people, I smiled and took the bet. This time the man distributed the cards very skilfully. Truly he must have studied this foolish art with long labour. I permitted him to win.

Then I bet him that I could do it the next time; and I did. He seemed a trifle disconcerted, and he laughed with difficulty. I was still £3 ahead. Once more I bet him, and this time I permitted him to win; the next time I won. This went on for a quarter of an hour, and I was still £3 ahead. The man with the cards began to perspire. We tried it once more with the bet increased to £5. I pointed out the card at the left as the ace.

"Wrong," said the man; "it's here."

And he turned up the card at the right. But it was a king. Then he turned up the one at the left, and it was the ace. I see thee smile as thou readest of my doing this old, old trick. But the man did not smile.

"There's some trick here," he said.

"Surely," said I, with great innocence, "no one could suspect trickery in this place."

I was now £8 a-head, but my manner re-assured my friend, and we went at it again, and again I won. The next time—I see thee smile again—no ace could be found at all.

"You duffer," said the man who took me there; "you've dropped it!"

They searched on the floor but could not find it. When they lifted their heads again, they beheld the ace standing on end on the table, and dancing. Brother of the Pyramids, I blush to tell thee that I practised this aged trick on these unsuspecting strangers; but I was anxious to measure their ignorance. They sprang to their feet and turned pale.

"What alarms you, friends?" I said. "There is a draught from the window which blows the cards about. Let us close it."

That re-assured them, and they closed the window. Then we began again. Once more the ace was missing. When they searched on the floor again, I determined now to bring to my aid our true art. The room began to grow dark. On the wall a luminous spot appeared. I bade them look at it, and, as they did so, I caused a large image of the ace to appear. The two men turned deadly pale. Then I caused aces to appear all over the room, of very many sizes, dancing and glowing.

"Holy herring!" exclaimed one of the men, with devout enthusiasm; "we've buncoed Old Nick!"

With that they made a rush for the door. But I had the key. The room began to fill with sulphurous smoke. The two men could not breathe. With a wild yell they hurled themselves through the window into the street, and, bleeding from many cuts, fled for their lives.

As for me, I put out the sulphur fire which I had kindled behind a chair, removed the wet handkerchief from my mouth, gathered up my cards and my mirrors, and departed in peace, £13 ahead.

Verily, Descendant of the Prophet, when thou goest abroad, always carry the apparatus of our Eastern art with thee, for mayhap it will be of goodly service.

A. C. BROWNING.

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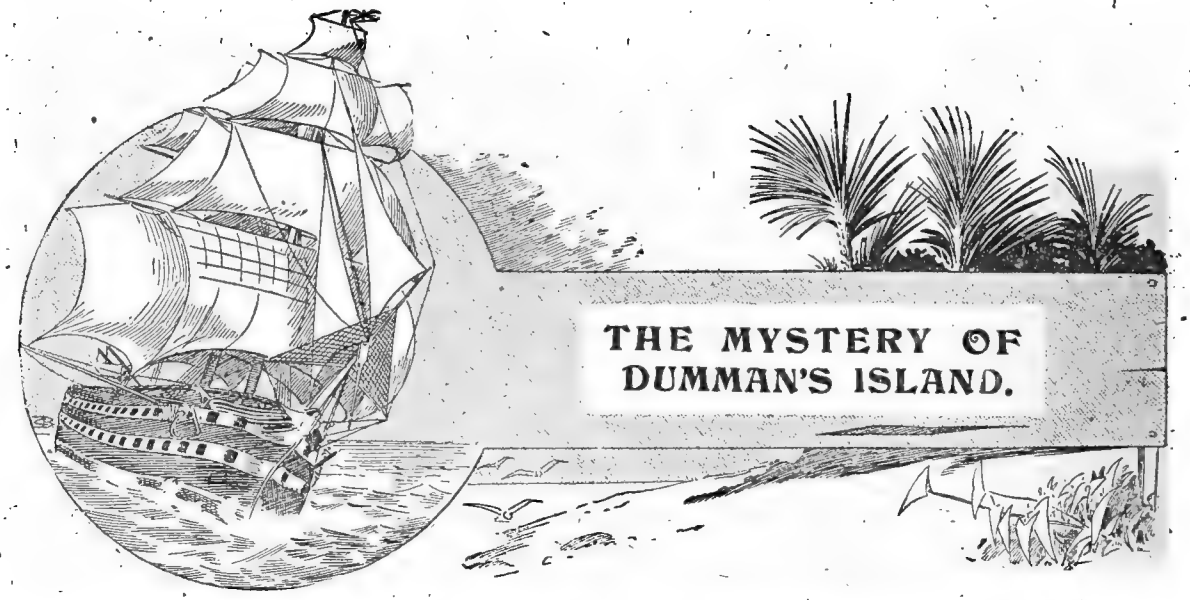

THE MYSTERY OF DUMMAN'S ISLAND.

In the heart of Wayne County, Pennsylvania, lies Lake Ariel, with alternating field and forests on its shores. Between hills to the north of it is the pretty village of Ariel.

The lake's southern bay bends sharply to the west, and just at this bend stands Dumman's Island, midway in the channel. This island, of not more than two acres, is covered with a growth of wild grass and stunted poplars. Why has the name of Dumman's Island been given to it?

The words are without doubt a corruption of the phrase, "Dumb Man's Island," and this is the story of its naming:

Towards the close of the last century, when the Miller and Purley families were hewing out farms from the hemlock forests south and east of the lake, a dumb man went to live on this island. Whence he came and how he subsisted no one knew, for no one ever visited his habitation. His known wish that people should avoid the island was respected.

The dumb man was seldom seen on the mainland. He was tall, straight, vigorous of motion, and was courteous to a nicety; but on looking into his clear eyes people instinctively felt that to cross his will would be dangerous. So he was left alone upon his island.

But there were two boys in the Jones settlement who resolved to visit the dumb man's island together, and explore the mystery of his habitation. The name of one of these boys was Robert Jones; the identity of the other was uncertain, but he is said to have been Will Purley.

Their opportunity came one afternoon when the dumb man visited the mainland, called at the house of Robert's father, and indicated his intention of going still further into the clearing. The boys slipped away, entered a boat, and paddled hurriedly across the half-mile of water to a gravelly beach on one side of the dumb man's island. Here they pulled their boat up, and left it under cover of some overhanging bushes.

It was in October, and darkness was already coming on, but the rising moon promised the boys sufficient light for exploration.

Towards the centre of the island, with a path leading up to it from the beach, was the dumb man's cabin—a rude stone structure pieced out with wood. The boys started towards it, but before they had taken half-a-dozen steps they stopped in amazement at the sound of a singing voice. They could distinguish no words, but the tune was familiar to them, and every note was plainly made out.

The voice was unlike any they had ever before heard. It was very sweet and very sad, and of a penetrating, tremulous, and unearthly tone.

The boys gazed at each other in dismay, and then, with one mind, retreated to their boat, which they drew into the shade of the bushes none too soon; for the next moment something emerged from the hut, and moved slowly in the dim light towards the beach.

It was a strange-looking creature, that partly rolled, partly dragged itself along the path, tumbling from side to side, stopping often as if for a moment's rest. If it had limbs they were invisible. It bore no bodily likeness to man or beast, save that once what seemed its white face gleamed for an instant in the moonlight.

The boys crept into their boat and seized their paddles to push off; but even as they did so they heard a faint splash of water on the lake, and, turning, saw the dumb man coming rapidly from the opposite shore. He sat with his back towards them rowing his boat. The lads, hardly daring to breathe, crouched down into the shadow of their little craft.

The strange figure on the path moved on with halting motion to the water's edge. The dumb man, with a few long, powerful strokes of the oars, sent the keel of his boat far up on the gravel of the beach. He leapt lightly to the ground, caught the strange object up in his arms, and kissed it. Then, most marvellous of all things, he talked to it!

The dumb man actually talked! The boys could not distinguish his words—at least, they were never able to tell what he said; but they knew that his voice was clear and musical, and they remembered that he spoke cheerfully and lovingly, and that once he laughed. They

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remembered, too, that the strange being answered, whether in words or not they could never say.

Talking to and caressing the burden in his arms, the man walked up the path from the beach and entered the hut.

The boys did not wait a moment to effect their escape. They pushed their boat off, leapt into it, and paddled away towards home as if for their lives.

When the wake of moonlit water grew long behind them they breathed more freely, but they did not feel completely at ease until they shot into the shadows of the eastern shore.

Before the blazing logs in the kitchen fireplace the boys that night told the story of their adventure to a family group of excited listeners.

The next day the strange tale, with exaggerations, went the rounds of the neighbourhood. The result was that fifteen men of the settlements met in the kitchen of Henry Jones' house three nights later to discuss the situation.

The general opinion seemed to be that the dumb man had given himself up to heathen practices, and that he kept on his island a strange and awful being whom he worshipped as a god. It was soon decided to visit his premises, with intent to expel the dumb man and destroy his deity, if examination proved their surmises to be correct.

"When shall we go?" asked one.

"Now! To-night! At once!" said several.

James Miller arose to counsel moderation and delay; but the magnetic impulse which sways larger bodies had already done its work here. With one accord the men seized their rifles and passed out into the night.

They hurried to the lake, embarked in three boats, and soon reached the beach at Dumb Man's Island. At the landing-place all was still. The moon was full, and the pale leaves of the poplar trees shivered white in the light wind.

Watching the bushes closely for an ambush, the men disembarked, drew up their boats, and gathered compactly to move on the dumb man's hut; but, before they could take one step forward, the dumb man emerged from the cabin door and came rapidly towards them.

They saw that he was armed. At fifteen paces from them he stopped, rested the butt of his rifle on the gravel at his feet, waved his hand towards them, pointed to the empty boats and then across the lake to their homes.

There was no mistaking his meaning. His face, white and haggard in the moonlight, was desperate with earnestness.

The men who faced him knew that he was in no mood for trifling; but they had come prepared for resistance, and were not to be turned back so easily.

Sam Purley stepped one pace to the front, and said:

"We have an errand here. When it is finished we will go back, not before. You have deceived us; you set yourself up to be dumb, but those are with us have heard you talk within the last four days. Those are with us who have seen you, on your island here, caress some strange creature in the form of neither man nor beast. Listen! We want no heathen gods among us, nor yet the worshippers of them. We demand that you bring out the thing that you keep here."

The form of the dumb man straightened and hardened till its rigid outlines seemed to inclose a thing of iron and steel. On his face were first the red marks of anger, then it paled with the white hue of pain.

Again he pointed commandingly to the lake and the eastern shore. When no heed was paid to his mute command he lifted his rifle to the level of his chin, and tapped the barrel of the piece significantly.

Then old Richard Miller, gaunt and bent, but hot-headed as in youth, cried out:

"Ay, you can fire! Fire if you will; but in one second from the time you touch the trigger you will be riddled with bullets. And what'll your heathen god do then, with your body dead on the sand? Answer me that."

The dumb man dropped his rifle in his hands, and lowered his head as if in painful thought. For the moment there was silence. No one stirred. All clearly heard the poplar leaves shivering, and the little waves that lapped the beach.

Suddenly, from the direction of the hut, came a sound strangely like and unlike a human voice, fine and thrilling, dying soon into a sad and tremulous wail.

A look of yearning and dread came over the dumb man's face as he glanced towards his hut. Throwing his rifle to the ground at his feet, he turned full upon his visitors, and reached out his hands to them beseechingly. Then at length he began to speak:

"Gentleman," he said, "it is true that I am not dumb I have imposed upon you, but I have done you no harm I am a man as you are men. I worship the God whom you worship. I have no heathen deity here. I have nothing here that calls for your disapproval. Believe me, I pray you, and go, that I may be alone."

Sam Purley again spoke up.

"If you have nothing here that is evil," he said, "no harm will come of our seeing what you have. Again we tell you to bring it forth."

The dumb man, for so he must still be called, since he was never known in that region by any other name, advanced a few steps and stood for a moment looking intently into the faces of the visitors. They could see the trembling of his lower lip and the glistening of tears in his eyes, for the moonlight fell full upon him. Then he said:

"Gentlemen, give me three days to myself. It is all I ask. At the end of that time come again. I shall be here. All that I have will be here. Then I will show you everything. I will tell you everything. But now I ask you to go. See! I fall on my knees and implore you to go. As you are men, with hearts in your bosoms, I beseech you, by the love you bear your children, to go and leave me with my own."

He was on his knees on the sand. His hands were clasped before him, his head was bowed to his bosom, and his strong frame was shaken with emotion.

The men who faced him looked at each other in silence. Then from the hut came again that unearthly cry. It was sharp and piercing now, and full of agony. It vibrated on the air till the moonlight itself seemed tremulous.

The kneeling man rose, turned his white face for one moment to his visitors, and then for one moment to the sky.

"Friends or foes," he said, "may the Heaven counsel you!"

Without another word he strode swiftly up the path away from the intruders, and disappeared in the shadows of his hut.

For a full minute no one of the intruders spoke; they were under the melancholy spell of that last agonised cry. Then Henry Jones stepped out to the front from among them, earnest and awe-stricken.

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"Friends," he said, "we have no further business on this island to-night. If there is a mystery here, it is God's mystery, and is not for us to fathom. Let us go home."

They turned back to the boats, and soon a great expanse of moonlit water lay between them and the shadowed shore of the island.

Three days later the dumb man came, at evening, to the house nearest the lake. His eyes bore traces of long weeping, and his face was haggard and pitiful to look on. To the man who met him at the door he said simply:

"Tell the men who came to my island three nights ago that it is my wish that they shall come again to-morrow, after midday, and bring with them someone to perform the rite of Christian burial."

Then he went away.

Word was sent throughout the settlement, a minister was found, and the next day three boats grated on the sandy beach of the island. The dumb man met his visitors at the landing-place, and as they stepped ashore he grasped each man's hand and said:

"I thank you."

After a little while he told them the story. Standing before them with bared head, he said:

"My friends, we are in the presence of death. At sunrise yesterday a soul went up from that hut to Heaven. With my own hands I have coffined the clay and dug the grave. He who died was my child. His bodily form was not like yours or mine. To human eyes he was abhorrent. Thirteen years ago I brought him here, a babe, and kept from him the sight of all human beings save myself, that he might not realise the horror of his own deformity. The better to thwart the curiosity of others I deceived you with a feigned dumbness. For this I now ask your pardon."

He paused. Some one in the company managed to blunder out that he had done right, and need ask no one's pardon.

Tears came into the dumb man's eyes and a great tenderness into his voice, and he said again:

"I thank you. My friends, in that blighted body yonder there lived as sweet and beautiful a soul as ever passed to immortality. For thirteen years I have shut my eyes to all this fearfulness of form, and delighted in the strong and steadfast love of that loving child. I declare to you to-day that I have borne no cross save this cross of parting, and even that becomes a crown of gladness on my head when I think of that bright spirit freed from its dread imprisonment, as fair and glorious now as are the angels of Heaven."

His eyes were lifted upwards, his face was transfigured with joy, and those who looked on him said afterwards that he must have seen the spirit of his child.

From the rude casket smiled a dead face that was worthy of the sculptor's chisel or the painter's brush, so very beautiful was it as it lay there in the sweet serenity of death.

Tenderly the bearers bore the coffined body to its grave; tenderly were said the words of Christian burial.

When all was over the dumb man turned in his boat and looked, for the last time in life, on the rocky shores and yellowing foliage of his island home. Over the grave of his child for a hundred years the wild grass has grown and the leaves of the poplars have shivered in the wind, but no one now can mark the place of burial, and even the island's story is nearly lost and forgotten.

P. MANNERING.

FIFTY GOLDEN SOVEREIGNS
GIVEN AWAY EVERY WEEK.

Every week the Editor of SHORT STORIES addresses fifty envelopes to fifty people in various parts of the country. Inside each envelope he places a sovereign, and locks them away in his private safe.

SIMPLY TAKE A POST-CARD and address it to the Editor under the following conditions:

☞ Ask if a sovereign has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink.

Fifty names and addresses have been picked out at random from directories, etc., etc.

No sovereign, however, will be awarded unless it is applied for, so it would be advisable for you to tell your friends to drop us a post-card, whether they are readers or not.

All applications for No. 5 distribution must reach us by November 7th addressed to The 5th Sovereign Editor, "Short Stories" Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Each application must be made separately.

Result of the Second Distribution appears on page 589.

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OUR CLIENT'S MONEY.

"THERE are some lives that are lived which in thrilling experiences savour more of drama than reality. I think I may consider some of my own actual experiences quite as sensational and dramatic as any set forth with the accompaniments of stage scenery," remarked Mr. Luscome, as he closed the door of his private office behind a client who had sought his legal services in a particularly sensational case.

Returning to his chair with a deep sigh of relief that his office hours were over for the day, he opened a box of choice cigars and pushed it towards me, lighting one himself and settling down for a quiet hour of relaxation and social chat.

"I remember," he resumed, "one instance particularly perhaps because it occurred while I was still young and impressionable and somewhat inexperienced; anyhow, I thought it thrilling enough at the time.

"I was about twenty and was reading law in the office of an old friend of my father's.

"One morning Mr. Evans called me into his private room, and told me that he had some business of a confidential nature that would necessitate sending me to a small village twenty miles out, at once. He then went to the safe and took out a box containing what appeared to be a large amount of money in notes of various denominations, which he ran over, counting rapidly.

"'Here, you count it also,' he said, indicating the pile of bank-notes and nodding towards a chair, which I drew up to the desk in front of him. I then began running over the notes slowly and carefully, he watching the operation.

"There was exactly five thousand pounds.

"'How much do you make it?' he asked.

"'Exactly five thousand,' I replied.

"'Precisely,' he returned. 'Now, I place these notes in your care. You are responsible for them from now on. Here, you'd better put them in this bag, and put the wallet into an inside pocket; and don't remove them until you have given them over to old Mrs. Harlow. Here's her address, and here is a time-table; make it as early a train as possible. That's all; be as quick as you can.'

"I thrust the wallet into the breast pocket of my coat, and walked out of the private office and made for my own desk.

"I knew the old lady, Mrs. Harlow; that is, I had seen her many times, she having been a client of the firm ever since I had been in the office, but I knew only this about her—that she was the widow of an old and eccentric gentleman who had died some five years since, and that the firm had been engaged, off and on, ever since, in arranging the affairs of the estate.

"The old lady herself was exceedingly fussy, and it did not do to displease her. This was probably why I was being rushed so in regard to getting the money to her at just such a time, although, for the life of me, I couldn't understand why the old lady must have that sum of money in such haste; but it wasn't my business to know or understand anything about it.

"I let the bag remain in the inside pocket of my coat, where I had first placed it, donning my overcoat and taking a cab to the station just in time to catch the one o'clock train.

"The day was raw and chilly, and the outlook from the car window was anything but diverting, as a slow, wet snow had begun to fall, and melted as it came, sifting and swirling and clinging to the window-glass, making a bleak, disagreeable blur of the landscape.

"When I reached Stillwell Station, I looked about for a fly.

"No sort of conveyance was in sight. I walked up to the porter and asked him the nearest and most direct way to Mrs. Harlow's residence.

"'It's a good bit up from here,' he replied, eyeing me curiously. 'Never been there before?'

"I assured him that I had not, else I should not be asking questions about how to find the place.

"'About how far is it?' I repeated.

"'Oh, about six miles, I should say,' he replied.

"'Six miles!' I repeated aghast. Six miles in such weather!

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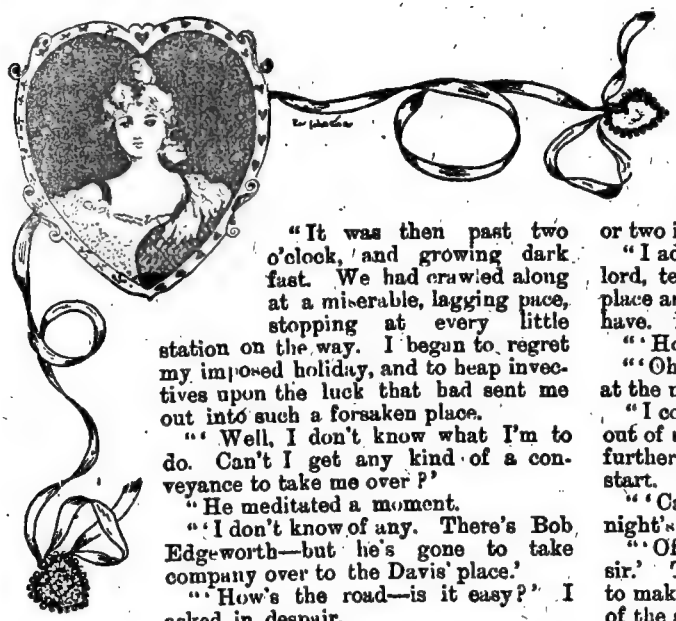

"It was then past two o'clock, and growing dark fast. We had crawled along at a miserable, lagging pace, stopping at every little station on the way. I began to regret my imposed holiday, and to heap invectives upon the luck that had sent me out into such a forsaken place.

"'Well, I don't know what I'm to do. Can't I get any kind of a conveyance to take me over?'

"He meditated a moment.

"'I don't know of any. There's Bob Edgeworth—but he's gone to take company over to the Davis' place.'

"'How's the road—is it easy?' I asked in despair.

"'Yes, the road's all right,' the porter replied. 'You want to take that one that leads up the hill for a couple of miles or so.'

"And then he launched into a full explanation.

"I pulled my collar up about my ears, drew my hat down and started. I tramped steadily on until dark, when I came to the junction of the road as the man had said.

"Not a person had I met in all the way, nor seen any signs of life. The snow had stopped falling, and the afternoon, or evening, was keen and frosty.

"As I travelled on with hastening steps I came finally to a small, two-storey house, built in what seemed to me a queer sort of way, as nearly as I could see, with rambling balconies and grass plots. I had half a mind to call and make inquiries about a conveyance to take me the rest of the way, but seeing no light, concluded the place was unoccupied, and went on.

"Finally I came to a large open space of broken ground, and discovered that I had either lost the road or else that the road didn't lead any further, but stopped a little way back. I tried to retrace my steps, but in the darkness could not see many feet ahead, and concluded I might as well push on in the hope of at last coming upon some habitation. The whole country so far appeared to have been deserted.

"On and on I laboured through drifts, now up and now down into ditches, it seemed to me for miles. I began to feel nervous, as there flashed across my mind all the stories I had ever read of travellers becoming lost in blizzards, for the wind was rising again and the snow began to fall and was driven into my face till it nearly blinded me.

"At length a faint ray of light in the distance, shining out upon my weariness and desolation, revived my spirits and hastened my steps.

"As I approached, I found that the light came from the small window of a little hovel like place that might have served as the habitation of some crank of a hermit.

"I walked up to the door and rapped loudly.

"'Who is it?' a gruff voice asked.

"'A traveller inquiring the way,' I responded: whereupon the door was opened and the swarthy face of a man peered out. He bade me come in, and glad to get within any kind of shelter, I obeyed with alacrity.

"The place seemed to be a sort of bar-room. This, then, must be the the wayside inn of which the porter had spoken. There were four or five rough-looking men and a woman or two in the place.

"I addressed myself to the one I took to be the land lord, telling him I was on my way to Mrs. Ha low's place and asked if he had any kind of a trap I could have. No, there was not.

"'How far is it from here?' I asked.

"'Oh, 'bout five or six miles or so,' he replied, glancing at the men sitting at the further end of the room.

"I couldn't believe it possible. I had wandered miles out of my way then. It was impossible to try to go any further; I must wait till morning and make a fresh start. I was done up.

"'Can I be accommodated with some supper and a night's lodging?' I asked.

"'Of course you can; sit down and warm yourself, sir.' The men about the fire pushed back their chairs to make room for mine, which the landlord set in front of the stove.

"After I had sat down, the conversation which my advent had evidently interrupted, was resumed, and I took the opportunity to have a look at my companions. I didn't like the look of them. They were, as I have said, rough-looking customers, and evil of countenance. They evidently cared no more for me, for after scrutinising me without taking pains to conceal their curiosity, they turned their attention to each other and said little to me.

"One of the women present was bustling about preparing supper, the fumes of which were most agreeable.

"I sat half dozing before the fire until supper was announced, when we all sat down to the table together, as the landlady seemed in no wise inclined to make any distinction in her attentions, evidently regarding me as no better than the others.

"The supper tasted good, and I ate heartily. After the meal was over, we resumed our seats by the fire and sat smoking comfortably. After finishing my pipe I withdrew, asking to be shown my bed, explaining that I was extremely tired, and must be up and on my way early next morning. The landlord lighted a candle, took my overcoat upon his arm, and led the way up a narrow flight of unarpeted stairs to a small dark room, where he set the candle down upon a table, bade me good-night, and withdrew.

"I sat down upon the side of the narrow uninviting-looking bed, and gazed about me. The room was quite small, bare and cheerless, and had a damp smell about it. I discovered that there was no lock on the door. I determined to take a nap without undressing, so blew out the candle and lay down across the bed.

"It was cold and uncomfortable. I could hear the preparations for the night going on downstairs, such as doors being closed and locked, or barred. Finally, chilled through, I decided to go downstairs myself and get a glass of whisky to keep me warm. I started down in my stocking feet.

"The lights were burning dimly, but the sullen-looking individuals, together with the landlord, were still

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sitting, smoking, round the fire, and conversing in low earnest tones. The creaking of the stairs under my feet warned them of my approach; and, glancing up and seeing me, they ceased talking, while the landlord advanced urbanely to see what I wanted.

"He procured the whisky and I drank it and retraced my steps upstairs to my room, but with a new determination not to sleep. Something in the manner of the men had put unpleasant ideas into my mind, and made me suspicious.

"I ought to have known better than to drink the whisky under the circumstances. Again I threw myself upon the bed, while a pleasant sensation of warmth, comfort and drowsiness crept over me. Before I knew it I was off in a doze.

"I was awakened by a soft, rustling noise outside my door, and the sound of breathing. A thrill of apprehension shot through me.

"I am not, and never was, a cowardly man. I had heretofore never known the sensation of fear, but now my heart was beating wildly, and I began to tremble all over. I waited a moment or so until thoroughly awake and confident; then I got up from the bed as softly as I could, and felt about for some weapon of defence.

"The storm was evidently over, for the moon was shining directly into the uncurtained window. I peered about in the light of it, but there was nothing at hand with which to ward off a possible attack.

"I had nothing in my pockets except a small pearl-handled paper-cutter in a morocco case, a dainty gift of recent date, and a silver match-box.

"All was silent. I pressed my ear to the crack of the door and listened. Presently there was a whispered consultation, and I heard the words in what seemed to be a woman's voice:

"'There's the knife! Where's Bill?'

"'Keep quiet—you'll wake him. Bill's gone after the rope.'

"Then all was silent again. I must do something and that quick. An idea seized me—the matches!

"I reached the bed and grasped a sheet; snatching it off I hastily wound it into a small roll, and crept to the fireplace. The place was old, and the wind blew down in great gusts. I pushed the roll of calico into the aperture and applied a match to it.

"It blazed furiously, but now blew up and now down the chimney, and out into the room. The bed was near by.

"The smoke came puffing out into the room from the burning sheet in the chimney, and, as it did so, I lit another match and held it to the mattress on the bed. In an instant the bed was ablaze.

"Then was the time for the last move in my desperate game. I came on to my feet with a bound intended to be heard, and springing to the door shouted:

"'Fire! Fire!'

"The smoke was pouring out from every crack of door and window.

"Again I raised the cry of alarm. I heard the sound of scuttling footsteps, and knew my host and his amiable associates in a would-be hideous crime were trying to escape from the vicinity of my door without my discovering them.

"Then my cry was repeated from below, and they came rushing upstairs and into my room while I passed them on the stairs with a volume of black smoke pouring after me. It choked them and they had to turn back.

"'Water! water!' I cried wildly, and snatching up a pail I rushed out into the yard.

"The landlord was shouting to the others, and I heard someone say the fire had caught in the chimney.

"They rushed down and out with pails and buckets to the well, but before they could regain the second floor they were driven back by the flames that by this time were encompassing everything; besides, they were so bewildered and distracted that they scarcely knew what they were about.

"'My wallet!' I cried, frantically feigning the greatest anguish and despair, and pretending to make a dash up the burning stairs. 'In Heaven's name, my wallet! It was under my pillow! A hundred pounds to the man who gets it!'

"The man designated as Bill looked at me for an instant bewildered, and then rushed by me and disappeared in the smoke, then, an instant later, dashed out again blackened and burnt, driven back by the flames.

"I was wailing and wringing my hands excitedly, when the sound of galloping horses' hoofs drew near, and several men on horseback and in carts came upon the scene.

"But it was too late. The flames were licking up everything, and all of us stood by shivering and watching it burn. In an hour all that was left of the wayside inn was a mass of blackened and charred ruins.

"One of the men who rode up to lend their aid took mine host and his wife and associates home for the night, while I rode away with another.

"As morning broke, I hastily swallowed a cup of coffee, borrowed a horse, and resumed my journey to Mrs. Harlow, and delivered up the money to her in person.

"'Dear me!' she simpered, as she counted the bank notes and wrote out a receipt, 'there wasn't any such great hurry for the money. I only wanted to know that Mr. Evans had it ready in case I *should* happen to want it.'

"I returned to my respected employer, and although I didn't tell him the whole story out and out (for arson isn't an agreeable word, and I didn't wish to make any trouble for myself or him either), still he understood, and in some way gave the old lady to understand that I had played the part of a hero in order to save her money.

"Of course, you know that I became acquainted with the only niece of Mrs. Harlow shortly afterwards and that lady is now my wife. When we were married the aunt insisted upon making me a present of exactly five thousand pounds, and the firm took me into partnership."

J. CLARKE.

JONES: "Which travels the faster, heat or cold?"

LONES: "Heat, of course. You cannot catch heat, but you can catch cold."

"MAMMA, I dess you'll have to turn the hose on me."

"Why, dear?"

"'Tas I've got my 'tockins on wrong side out."

"I WON'T have you," said the leading lady tragically to the low comedian. "Never approach me again on the subject. My mind's made up."

"So's everything else about you," and then he fell through a garden scene to dodge the withering glance she shot at him.

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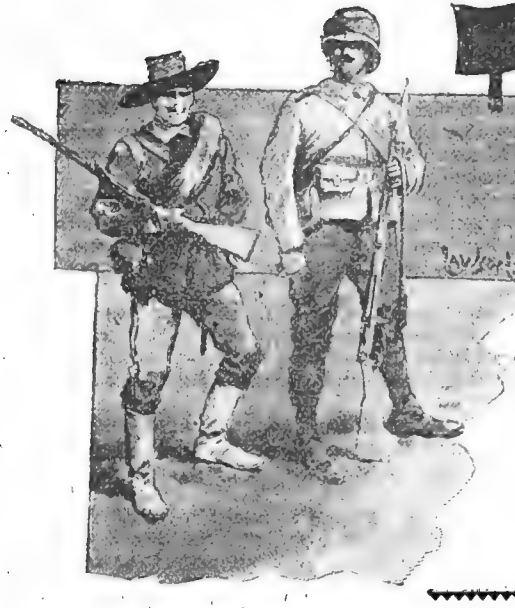

THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A Secret Mission.

Quetta is lively enough at all times. Perched upon the hills in that narrow province which keeps apart two savage and mysterious countries, it seems to look down upon them both like an alert and fearless sentinel, ready at a moment to give the alarm and call to action the sleepless army that guards our Eastern Empire. Quetta is the Metz of India.

This British outpost felt the thrill of its own power, and like a strong man, was full of life and movement, as the English troops began to muster within the cantonment, and camp upon the hillsides.

It was an extraordinary spectacle, surely, which no country in the world but one could afford. The opulent East, with her infinite variety of race and tongue, seemed represented here in endless confusion; and over all dominated the watchful Briton, impartially supreme, holding firmly in his hand the ends of all this perplexed entanglement of humanity, the one being who gave harmony and unity to a bewildering puzzle.

At the headquarters' mess were gathered officers of all degrees known to the staff and of all regiments, and the crowded room was alive with animated talk, as men sat or stood around the table, snatching a hasty meal, too preoccupied to eat heartily, and flushed with the excitement which the near prospect of fighting roused in them.

Youthful subalterns, rejoicing in the sabre-tache of the A.D.C., with the splendid certainty of youth, planned out a brilliant campaign and won a hundred battles against unheard-of odds; while the older men, anxious, though scarcely less excited, applied the fruits of their experience earnestly to the situation and speculated on the plan of attack.

At one of the tables there came a moment's lull in the conversation, and Captain Bradley, of the 2nd Gurkhas, leaning over to Graham, of the 5th Lancers, asked:

"What has become of Adams all this time?"

This seemingly innocent question attracted to him in a moment the attention of all in the vicinity.

"Adams!" exclaimed Captain Graham, a little startled. "Yes, it's very queer. He got leave two months ago, and he hasn't been recalled yet."

"What makes it singular," said Bradley, "is that exactly the same thing occurred to Hutchinson of Ours. He had barely come back from England when he asked for leave and got it, although there were definite rumours of war about at the time, and he's an awfully valuable man."

"Did he go home?" asked a subaltern.

"No, that's the funny part of it. Then there's Haughton of the 36th Sikhs, and Anderson gave me four cases the other day where some of the best officers in different regiments had been granted leave, all at the same time, and in not a single case did there seem the slightest cause for it."

Graham stroked his chin reflectively and meditated.

"It's a devilish strange case," he said after this effort had brought him back again to dubiety. "Where are they all gone? Why don't they come back? Why are they not ordered to rejoin their regiments?"

"Yes; and why are they all such particularly valuable men?" added Bradley.

"It's jolly hard luck for them, anyhow. I wonder what Hutchinson thinks of being left out of the fun."

Snatching a hasty meal.

"But is he?"

It was a meek lieutenant who spoke, and Bradley turned swiftly upon him in surprise.

"Why, what do you think is up?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know," was the modest answer. "But it seems to me to be just a little too peculiar for a coincidence. There are about twenty of the best officers in the army, all of them of experience and peculiar fitness. They all take a holiday when they don't want it; and they all disappear and leave no traces behind them. If you think it's an accident, why, you are entitled to your

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opinion; but I say there's something mighty cute going on somewhere, and, you mark my words, they're doing their work somewhere, and will turn up all serene, just exactly when they have done it."

It was indeed a curious affair, but, after vainly trying to solve the mystery, the group of officers gave it up, pronouncing it to be inexplicable save in the higher logic of the Sirkar.

Perhaps their perplexity would have increased had they been witnesses of a little scene that was then in course of transaction in a small and wretched native village some sixty miles north.

As the Sibi-Quetta railway drags itself with difficulty up the rough and hilly country which stretches to the borders of Afghanistan, it leaps a terrific chasm in the Pishin Range, and disappears just as it is reaching its final stage, into a tunnel. The traveller has had his last look at India, for when the train emerges from the famous Khojack Tunnel, it is brought to a stand in the little terminus of Chaman, and the Kandahar valley is at his feet. Here the great iron road ceases abruptly and almost reluctantly, and the civilised arts, thus pressed to the uttermost limit, are bidden back by the triumphant barbarism, holding its savage stage beyond. The engine gives place to the camel.

But where sleeper and bolt and chain and rail may not pass, the pick and the shovel have forced their way, and a broad level road carries on the tale to Kandahar.

And this artery of commerce at every step whispers promise of the iron rails, for it has been made to carry them; and when the time has come, suddenly and swiftly there will spring up a new permanent way which will carry the engine to the gates of the city.

It was here, at Chaman, and in view of the high road that penetrated the country of the Afghan, that Major General Galbraith, commanding the Quetta district, stood in conversation with a tall, distinguished-looking officer, whose charger's reins were looped through his left arm. At some distance, prepared as for a long and arduous journey, were four men, one an Englishman, and three of Indian birth.

There was an unusually grave look on the General's face as he addressed his companion, Captain W. J. Peyton, of the 7th Bombay Lancers, the man who had earned the C.M.G. for leading the Egyptian troops out of Harrar.

"I have kept to the last moment, by instructions from headquarters," he said, "the orders which I have to transmit to you. My duty is simple, and I cannot say that I can throw any light on most of the questions you have asked me. My instructions are to associate with you an officer of experience and special knowledge and three thoroughly reliable native officers, such as you would care to take on a dangerous mission. You are, I understand, satisfied?"

"Most satisfied," answered Captain Peyton with a glance at the adjoining group.

"You could not have better assistance," agreed the General. "Captain R. G. R. de Vismes, of the 10th Bombay Infantry, is an instructor in army signalling, he has the certificates for higher standard Persian and Pushtu, he holds one for French, he is a qualified interpreter of German, and has a passed certificate for Russian. These qualifications, I am instructed, will be invaluable to you."

The Captain looked puzzled at this extraordinary recital. The General appeared to have been specially coached in de Vismes' many acquirements.

"Then there are not three better native officers than Risaldar Shah Nawaz Khan, and Jemadars Musa Khan and Gurdal Singh. They are proficient in tongues, and all three brave men," went on General Galbraith.

"But what am I to do with them?" asked Captain Peyton. "And why this costume?" and he looked down at his attire, which was of semi-native character, half uniform, half disguise.

"I do not know," replied the General, "you will find out later. Meanwhile, I am to hand you this packet. You will ride as hard as possible to Kandahar, and there open it. You will find a second sealed letter and instructions for yourself with certain safe-conducts from the Amir and others. Everything is there explained. You are not to divulge the contents of your letter to anyone save to Captain de Vismes, so that in case of accident to yourself he may be able to act for you. If you both fail then the mission is to be intrusted to the senior among the native officers. I am only at liberty to tell you that you must be prepared for very many days of hard riding. You are each provided with a second horse and this will greatly facilitate your journey. For the rest, have patience; at Kandahar everything will be clear."

"And you shall run there, dog and liar!"

Captain Peyton took the packet and buttoned it closely beneath his tunic.

"I understand perfectly," he replied gravely. "I am thankful for the trust and for being appointed to this special service and post of danger. Whatever my duty is, I will do it as far as a man may."

"Good-bye," said the General as he held out his hand, not without emotion; "good-bye—and come back!"

In a few minutes the little company had ridden off along the great highway, and were lost to view.

* * * * *

Sir George White, Commander-in-Chief in India, took the field in person at the head of the 1st Army Corps.

This consisted of 50,000 men, who were strategically grouped to afford the utmost possible rapidity in concentration upon Quetta. The 2nd and 3rd Army Corps of 50,000 men each were equally well prepared in mobilisation and transport, but as they must be collected and forwarded from Bengal, the Central Provinces, Lower Bombay, the Madras Presidency, and even far distant Burmah, they necessarily required more time to reach the frontier of Afghanistan.

Commissariat arrangements for each corps were quite complete, but owing to the limited capacities of the Sibi-Quetta line and the Bolan Pass route, Sir George White decided that an interval of a week should elapse between the departure from Quetta of the head of each of the three great columns.

By arrangement with the Ameer of Kabul, whose wishes were most ably and energetically carried out by Sir Salter Pyne, his trusted agent and engineer, vast quantities of forage and such stores as the country afforded were dispatched along the Hazara and Hari Rud valleys to Kandahar and Herat, which latter place, it was calculated, the advance guard of the British Army would reach about the 28th of June.

From Persia, too, it was confidently anticipated that the acute merchants of Khorassan would send supplies of grain and provender when such a good customer as the Government of India was in the field.

Both Amir and Shah were fully aware that the conquest of England by the allies meant the prompt absorption of Persia and Afghanistan into the Russian Empire. Although the timorous Persian potentate dared not, at first, take active steps to assist the English by troops, he quickly made it known that caravans might, with all safety, use the Yazdin and Khaf trade routes, which was all that the British Commander required.

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But Abdurrahman Khan, Amir of Kabul, was made of stronger metal.

Horse, foot, and artillery did he muster with all speed, placing them unreservedly at the disposal of Sir George White, and as a telegraph line now connected the Afghan capital with Peshawur, the Commander-in-Chief was, as we shall see, enabled to make use of these singular but valuable allies from the first moment that hostilities broke out.

The total British and native troops in India were 150,000, being almost evenly divided in racial numbers.

In addition to them were 60,000 Imperial Service troops, raised and armed by the different princes of high degree scattered throughout the Indian Empire.

The help of these levies, which for some years had been periodically inspected and approved by English officers set apart for the work, was promptly offered to and accepted by the Government.

From these sources, including the Afghan contingent, Sir George White calculated upon having nearly a quarter of a million of effective troops, all thoroughly seasoned to the climate and other conditions of Eastern warfare, under his command when he concentrated his forces at Merv early in July.

The loyalty of India had now been put to its first great test, and the country had passed through the ordeal exactly as most sensible men predicted would be the case.

It is not that the Mussulman and Hindu populations of that great dependency have, or pretended to have, any special reference for British domination.

If there be such a thing as patriotic feeling or national enthusiasm in the East—a very doubtful postulate—it could hardly be expected to burn furiously at the shrine of a strange land 7,000 miles away.

But that which certainly does obtain beyond the Exile's Gate is self-interest, and every personal and commercial instinct revolted against the idea of exchanging British for Russian Rule.

Every intelligent native of India laughed at the idea, and as the majority of the people neither know nor care who it is that governs them, the chance of Russian sympathies causing internal disturbances was slight indeed.

Nevertheless, to make quite sure, a number of Russian spies and some two thousand of the most dangerous fakirs were quietly lodged in gaol as a precautionary measure.

The only real danger to public peace arose from the *budmash* or disorderly classes among the population—that large and easily excited section of society which sees in rapine and revolution the opportunity for plunder.

Rich natives had more to fear from these gentry than the Europeans, as there is no pleasure in this world so keen for a Pathan dacoit as to cut the throat of a Bengali banker.

Special police precaution were necessary, and the volunteers, to the number of 28,000, were mobolised, armed with ball cartridge, and kept up constant patrols in the bazaars and along the main roads.

So successful were the measures taken by the authorities, that out of nearly 300 millions of people resident in the Indian Empire something like five-sixths of them never knew that a war had begun, or ended.

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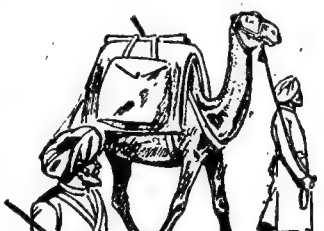

A commissariat of camels.

Lord Elgin was anxiously examining the transport and commissariat arrangements in company with the Military Member of Council, Lieut.-General Sir Henry Brackenbury, when the news came of the departure from Australia of the first contingent of 20,000 troops for home service.

"They are going by way of Vancouver and the Canadian Pacific," observed the Viceroy. "How long will it be before they reach England?"

"At best they cannot get there before the end of June," said the officer.

"And by that time Canada and the United States will have poured ten times the number of men into France and Germany," went on Lord Elgin.

"Yes," assented the military member. "These Cornstalks would be more useful to us, with our relatively small British forces than to England."

"Why should they not come to our aid?" cried Lord Elgin. "Arrange at once that the Governor of Hong Kong shall confer with Admiral Freemantle and Major-General Hutton with the object of diverting the fleet to Karachi and disembarking them there. Don't forget to promise the Australians that they shall have their fill of fighting before they see Moscow."

When the time came the Australian officers and men were delighted with the proposal. Thus it happened that Sir George White led into Central Asia the most mixed, and perhaps the strongest, armed force that the world had ever seen.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Crossing of the Helmund.

General Alikhanoff was the man ordained by fate to lead the Russian advance upon India.

Himself no Russian, being a Daghestanu named Ali Khan at birth, the Kismet of the East, which corresponds to Napoleon's Marshal's baton carried in the knapsack of every private soldier, led him to high command in Central Asia.

But the trusted representative of the Tsar must have a more distinguished title than ancestry provided, so Ali Khan became Alikhanoff, which is a fine-sounding name, and means a good deal on the Afghan frontier.

He was the central personage in Transcaspian politics, the wolf ever ready to pounce upon his prey, the living embodiment of the ceaseless creeping of Russia upon India.

But now the attitude of crouching watchfulness was abandoned.

Two words from St. Petersburg: "To Kandahar," set in motion the vast organisation which had of late been perfecting itself for the expected march, and the scar across Alikhanoff's forehead became livid with excitement as he gave the necessary order to his staff.

The imperial plan was boldly simple. No nonsense this time about armies crossing the Alps of the Pamir region, or cutting their way through the rocky fastnesses of the Balkh-Kabul route.

These things were well enough to serve as twister for the lion's tail in the piping times of peace. But when war with its rapid menace and fierce directness was meant, the easy, fertile, and well-watered country between Zulfikar, Herat, and Kandahar was the natural line of swoop for the human beasts of prey led by the ablest officer in Central Asia.

Transcaspian, Orenburg and Ural Cossacks, Turkestan and West Siberian artillery, the Third and Fourth Turkestan Infantry Brigades, with a number of picturesque looking cut-throats from Askabad, Merv, Ferghana, and the Syr Daria, formed the excellent irregular force of 100,000 men with which Alikhanoff made his dash from Zulfikar and Kushk upon Herat.

Nor did he pause there a day.

The small Afghan garrison fled at the mere news of his approach, and, disregarding the reports of spies who warned him of the massing of Afghan levies all along the Paropa-

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misus and Sufed Koh southern watershed, he dashed onwards with impetuous haste.

For his absolute and final orders were to seize and hold Kandahar at all costs, and not to move a step further until the real offensive expedition, consisting of 150,000 regular troops under the command of the Grand Duke Paul, had reached Kandahar from the Caucasus and Moscow.

There burst upon them the whole strength of the Royal Fusiliers.

All was in readiness for the *coup*—trains, waggons, supplies, on the lines of railway and at depôts, steamers on the Caspian Sea to ferry the army of the Caucasus from Baku to Usum-ada.

It was a magnificent scheme. It had no defect in calculation of fact or detail, and it only assumed that the British lion was asleep until he was rudely awakened by the events of May 1st.

Now, a man may catch a lion asleep, but he who says he has entrapped a slumbering tiger should be disbelieved. India crouched, it is true, but it was that she might spring the farther.

Alikhanoff's rapid march through Sabzawar and Farah, the chief towns between Herat and Kandahar, was of more interest to him than to this chronicle of events.

That it was a magnificent performance is assured by the fact that in the early days of June his advance guard of Ural Cossacks cleared a cloud of Afghan horsemen out of Chorab, which is twenty-five miles distant from Giriskh, on the river Helmund, and Giriskh is 100 miles from Kandahar.

The Afghans had been troublesome of late. They buzzed round the columns like flies round a carcass, and many a nomad's saddle was emptied, and many a Kirghese warrior bit the dust as they straggled on the outskirts, ever in quest of forage or booty.

But General Alikhanoff knew he must pay this toll in human lives when he passed the Gate of India, and he smiled as he glanced over the reports of his staff, showing the excellent progress of the troops.

"My dear friends in St. Petersburg will be pleased when they hear that I am already within striking distance of Kandahar," he thought, and the parting of the thin lips over the firmly set teeth suggested unpleasantness, for the "dear friends" alluded to were they at that moment anywhere near Chorab. The Central Asian commander had no cause to love the Court sycophants at the capital.

It was prudent to halt a little while, and pull his corps firmly in hand before he attempted to cross the Helmund, where the Afghans would surely oppose him in force.

"They are mere pariahs, these Shia dogs," said Alikhanoff, "yet they can bite. I must dose them well with lead when I get them packed together."

Not until June 10th could even his impatient eagerness decide that all was ready for the important step.

Many spies informed him of a large gathering of trained Afghan troops on the further bank of the Helmund, and one man, a Hindu fanatic, warned him that the English were behind them.

"Yes, fool," cried the General angrily. "It needs no wise priest to tell me they are at Quetta."

"Not Quetta, honoured one, but at Singbur." And Singbur is but a few miles on the south side of the Helmund.

Alikhanoff knew that this thing could not be. The Indian army, at best, must now be concentrating at Quetta. A few squadrons of cavalry, with a couple of infantry regiments, aided and abetted by the Amir, might perhaps have dashed through Kandahar.

"What woman's tale is this?" he growled. "The *lal coorti** at Singbur? Impossible!"

"Nay, it is true. They swarm on the hill-slopes and in the valleys. May they be accursed!" screamed the fakir. "You march to the sacrifice, O deliverer!"

"And you shall run there, dog and liar," thundered Alikhanoff, thoroughly incensed. A minute later the fakir was swinging from the bough of a tree as a warning to all spies who gave false news.

That night Giriskh was occupied and by daybreak the passage of the Helmund commenced.

Some Afghan guns and infantry that would have disputed the crossing were quickly silenced by the West Siberian and Turkestan mountain batteries. Cossacks from the Ural and Orenburg plunged through the three fords available at this place of season, and spread fan-like over the country in front and along the banks to the east and west. Infantry, guns, and transport prepared to follow.

This, then, was the passage of the Helmund so talked of by the English. How they boast, these Feringhis! Is there not an interval for breakfast?

Yes, an eternity, Alikhanoff.

Nearly one half of the Russian army had crossed the river, and in loose array advanced in the direction of Singbur. Before them the living dust-cloud moved, as the Afghans, with many a desperate Parthian shot, steadily retired.

And Alikhanoff, as he surveyed the advance of his troops and saw that already he held in his grasp the river which barred the way to Kandahar rejoiced in his heart.

"Raise your dust, ye Afghan vermin, the Cossack whip is scourging you!" he shouted in exultation, as he saw the slowly disappearing cloud.

But suddenly there was an uneasy swerve among these same Cossacks. Their loosely-knit ranks reeled as if from a sudden shock and came to a confused and disorderly halt. A new and terrible sound smote the air and came to the ears of Alikhanoff, a sound that must have been known of old and feared by him, for he started and changed colour.

For as the Cossacks pressed on wildly, the dust cloud parted to the left and right, and through the gap there came a frightful roar, and a hail of shrapnel rained upon the Russian advance, shattering it into ragged fragments.

There was no need to ask what new thing had happened. The English had arrived and now on the open plain were waiting to embrace the foe.

"It was no woman's tale after all!" exclaimed the Russian general as he ground his teeth. For he, Alikhanoff, subtlest of men, had walked into a trap. Half his army was helpless on the hither side of the river. And beyond it his irregular troops, in no settled order, and unprepared for serious action, were hemmed in between two deadly perils, the English guns and the dark flowing river of Helmund.

Perhaps this unexpected enemy was few in number.

He dashed along to the river, and made his way rapidly across, and then hastened to marshal his troops, throwing them out in a form best suited to meet attack, and to at least hold the enemy off till the remainder of his army had passed over the river and joined them.

But General Sir George White had no intention of assisting Alikhanoff in his admirable design.

The British army was not a large one. All told, the Commander-in-Chief had but 50,000 men, or one half the numbers of the enemy. But there were enough for his purpose. Generalship can dispense with multitudes when Asiatics are in front.

* Redcoats.

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The day before he had carefully selected a cavalry brigade of 5,000 sabres, consisting of the 5th Dragoon Guards, the 5th Lancers, the 5th Bombay Cavalry, and other picked native details, and, putting them under the command of Major-General H. F. Grant, ordered them to debouch to the right, cross the Helmund a few miles up, and occupy a hidden position of observation on the Kala Musa route.

"You will take no part in the engagement," he told the General, "until we have dealt our blow. I count on you to convert a victory into a rout."

To experienced officers this manœuvre was perfectly intelligible, but there was no little astonishment when it was found that a second brigade, of half the strength, consisting of the 4th Royal Irish Dragoon Guards, the 11th Hussars, the 2nd Bengal Lancers, and the 13th Bengal Lancers, 2,400 sabres in all, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel P. K. Doyne, was ordered to the rear, in reserve, and that a commissariat of *sowari* camels, the most perfectly equipped of any that had ever been organised in India, was allotted to it. What purpose could this apparent waste of good men serve?

To the brigade itself the question was a bitter one, and there was much grumbling. For who that bears a sabre cares to see a fight afar off and stand like a child unable to taste of it. Colonel Doyle alone showed patience, as well he might, for he had his instructions, and much he smiled as he ran them over again and again with lingering fondness.

And now, as the Cossacks raced along, the main body of the army, hidden by the formation of the country, calmly waited their opportunity. It came when the wild Afghans, parting on either side, gave room for the British artillery massed in the centre.

The shock was terrible. As stream after stream of deadly shot poured impetuous into their ranks, the Russian lines reeled and fell. Nor did Sir George White give a moment's space for rallying. His infantry moved rapidly forward, sustained by the never ceasing guns, and flung itself with desperate courage upon the ranks of the enemy. The onset was as irresistible as it was unexpected. The Turkestan Brigades, without guns, unprepared for attack, broken up and disordered, hesitated a second, and then fell away in wild confusion. But there came no lull in the severity of the attack. The British infantry drove them back foot by foot, relentless and untiring, until, unable longer to sustain so deadly an onset, the Russians fled to the river and sought to cross it.

Alikhanhoff was in despair. Flinging himself wildly amongst the flying troops, he bade them rally at the ford.

"Dogs," he shouted, "are you to be beaten back by sticks?"

Stung by his words, a West Siberian regiment attempted to form up on the bank of the river. It was a desperate and useless effort. For like a thundercloud there burst upon them the whole strength of the Royal Fusiliers, who, at the edge of the bayonet, pierced through them and forced them into the river.

Crocodiles in the Helmund waxed fat for months.

And now the artillery, hastening up behind the infantry, took its place upon the shelving bank, and across the water there belched into the helpless remnant of the Russian army a storm of shot. Reply was useless. The Russian guns could only decimate their own ranks. Between them and the English was a panic-stricken border of flying soldiers, carrying with them the infection of their terror and breaking up the solid battalions, which, helpless and stricken, lined the northern bank.

It was impossible to withstand so deadly a storm; before the tireless British guns the remainder of the invading army, vainly struggling to retain its order, broke and fell away, and in half-an-hour it was in frantic and disorderly flight.

Now was General Grant's opportunity, and nobly he availed himself.

As the Russians spread themselves over the country beyond Girishk the 5,000 picked English and native cavalry dashed down from their post and precipitated themselves upon the enemy.

Mahomed Khan ran him through the heart.

It was the last and deadliest stroke. The Brigade struck the Russian force like a thunderbolt, splitting it up into a hundred helpless and scattered fragments. Disorganised, disunited, filled with the mad terror that knows no limits, caring only that it should be somewhere away from the terrific and unendurable onslaught, the once magnificent army of Russia betook itself to aimless and pitiful flight.

Sir George White, as he swept the scene through his glasses, could not help feeling a faint flutter of pity.

"Poor devils!" he exclaimed. "They had better have remained here."

For he knew the Afghan, and what manner of welcome was already prepared for the flying army amongst those treacherous hills and valleys to the north.

Foremost in the pursuit was Sirdar Mahomed Khan, who had been lent for the day to serve as native aide-de-camp to Major-General Grant.

The Sirdar was thoroughly enjoying himself. Every thrust and cut at a Cossack was accompanied by a choice expletive. "*Sug!*"* he roared as he drove his sword through the ribs of a gentleman from Orenburg. "Son of a pig!" and tumbled a Kirghese into a ditch. "Bazaar-born!" and a Ural nomad fell beneath his stroke.

At last his strong country-bred, sired by a Norfolk trotter from a half-bred Arab mare, brought him alongside a Russian officer vainly urging his tired horse to more strenuous effort.

It was Alikhanoff, desperate, pallid, frenzied with shame and rage, who, borne back through the Helmund by the press of the fight, now saw no alternative but to fly with the rest.

Mahomed Khan knew him in a second, even amidst the wild *mélange* of the rout.

"*Din! Din!*"† he shrieked. "Thou art running back to Penjdeh, then, O Ali Khan!" And he closed in to deliver a cut that should have cleaved the Russian commander to the chin had it struck him fairly.

Alikhanoff had no time to ask for quarter. But he tried to save himself. Rapidly wheeling his horse he disconcerted the other's aim and received the powerful cut on the forte of his sword. But the Sirdar was not to be denied.

By the force of his onset he was jammed up against his opponent. Quick as lightning he smashed the hilt of his sabre into Alikhanoff's face, and as the Russian reeled in the saddle beneath the blow Mahomed Khan ran him through the heart.

Calling two sowars the Sirdar bade them guard the corpse, but as he rode on he muttered: "I grow old, to use the point. There is more satisfaction in the cut!"

Meanwhile the cavalry brigade commanded by Colonel Doyne, now released from their inactivity, moved forward at the trot, crossed the Helmund, and advanced rapidly towards the north-west.

Many a fugitive Russian, seeing this compact force moving onward, and seemingly disregarding the pursuit, vaguely wondered, whilst he still had life, what its object could be, and when Mahomed Khan saw them he clapped spurs to his horse to rejoin his regiment. Russia heard of that brigade before she heard of Alikhanoff.

(To be continued.)

* The Persian for "hound."
† The Mussulman battle-cry.

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SHORT TRUTHS.

SHAVER writes to ask if there is any health value attached to a beard. ——Decidedly; they are better respirators than science could ever make. The hair of the moustache not only absorbes the moisture and miasma fogs, but it strains the air from the dust and soot of our great smoky cities. It acts also in the most scientific manner by taking heat from the warm breath as it leaves the chest and supplying it to the cold air taken in. It is a respirator and a comforter as well, so that with a good thick, bushy beard, a man might face a blizzard with less chance of taking cold.

C. T. F.—The peculiarly offensive odour of eggs when they reach the stage in which they are considered to be most suitable for the purposes of public meetings is due to the combination of sulphur and hydrogen, as the result of decomposition, forming sulphuretted hydrogen, a gas which is both malodorous and poisonous.

BOOK-WORM.—Generally speaking, the best print for reading is that known as long primer. In the case of artificial illumination, a white light is to be preferred. The form of the letters is of less importance than the thickness of the strokes, and there should be a fair space between the lines. Most of the matter in *S.S.* is set in bourgeois.

P. G.—The highest lighthouse round our coast is that which stands on the Skerryvore rocks. It towers 138 feet into the air, is 42 feet in diameter at the base, and 16 feet at the top.

MISS G. wants to know of a suitable expression by which she can refer to her lover to mere acquaintances. She considers "my lover," "my friend," "my young man," and such like expressions "too awful for words." ——I quite agree with you, MISS G. Unfortunately there does not appear to be an equivalent in our language for the French *"fiancé."* Under the circumstances, however, I do not think you can do better than borrow from that language, unless you refer to the gentleman in question as "Mr. So-and-So."

W. D. G.—The Queen has thirty-six chaplains in her English establishments, who are known as "chaplains in ordinary to her Majesty." Besides these there are twelve "honorary chaplains." The monetary value of the appointment is merely nominal. Each chaplain receives £30 annually.

H.W.K.—The nest which is made into soup and eaten by the Chinese is that of a bird similar to the swift. The nests are made of a gelatinous secretion from the mouth of the bird.

H. G.—No, the Japanese do not take to fiction; they consider life too short for that sort of thing. Of 27,000 books published in that empire in one year, only 462 were of that class. Works on philosophy, arts and science and religion stood the highest in the list.

BEAUTY.—Every description of veil affects the eyesight more or less. The most objectionable kind is the dotted veil, although the influence of this variety for evil is more marked in some samples than others. The least objectionable veil is that without dots, sprays, or other figures, but with large regular meshes made with single compact threads.

ROMEO asks why a strong emotion of any sort takes away one's appetite for the time being.——Because it stops the formation of the digestive juices, and the stomach for the time ceases to be an active and a craving organ. Why an emotion should have such an effect is unknown, but it seems to be an arrangement of Nature to prevent the stomach being overloaded when there is anxious work to be done by the body.

LIBRARIAN.—Twice as many books are printed in Germany as are turned out in France.

R. N. H.—The greater part of the cast-off uniforms of our soldiers find their way into the shops of dealers in second-hand clothing. The coats are then either cut up, sold to theatrical managers, or exported to Africa and elsewhere for trading purposes with the Kaffirs and other uncivilised people.

M. A.—It is very rare for a person with blue eyes to be colour-blind.

W. W.—The hardest wood used by the Japanese is *kiyaki*. It resembles oak in colour, and is capable of being very highly polished. It is employed for very fine work, and for boat-building and other purposes where strength is required. It is now becoming scarce.

H. H.—In Norway, where a broken-winded horse is rarely seen, a bucket of water is always placed within reach of a horse when he is feeding, and the animal alternately takes a mouthful of hay and a draught of water. You might do worse than imitate the practice.

DOWN.—More than 10,000lb. of eider-down is collected annually in Iceland, 7,000 of which are exported. The price at one time was a guinea a pound.

EPICURE—Those who have partaken of peacock declare that it is decidedly tough eating; the same may also be said of the flesh of the swan. The fact of the latter bird ever having been a favourite dish in this country speaks volumes for the digestive organs of our forefathers.

B. P. R. puts the question: "Why do we hear best with our mouths open?" ——Because we place the Eustachian tubes in free communication with the atmosphere through which the waves of sounds are propelled. This gives a freer and more equable vibration to the drum of the ear on which the waves strike.

GOURMAND.—Larvae or caterpillars eat more than any other creature in proportion to their size.

H. S.—You must carry a purse deep and capacious if you have any idea of travelling in China. For a start, if you exchange two English half-crowns for their equivalent in the money of the Celestial Empire, you ought to receive some twelve hundred brass coins of various weights and sizes, every one pierced with a square hole in the centre and strung on a string.

W. M.—The language with the greatest number of letters in its alphabet is the Abyssinian, which has 208 distinct characters.

M. P.—A very good plan to prevent sea sickness is to tie a shawl tightly round the waist and sit upright on the cabin floor or on the deck until the body has got accustomed to the sea air and the motion of the vessel.

FELIX.—No. It is a mistake to suppose that the tip of the tongue is the most sensitive part of the body. Those engaged in polishing substances that require a very high degree of smoothness always use the cheek-bone as their touchstone for detecting any roughness.

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Series discount: 5 per cent. for 13, 10 per cent. for 26, 15 per cent. for 52 insertions.

Black blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, Nov. 8th, if intended for the Issue on sale Nov. 22nd, and dated Nov. 26th. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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100 BICYCLE PRIZES!

All Prizes in Former Competitions have been taken up; eight machines not being claimed in time were passed on.

"We have examined the A.B. Cycles, and find them well made, high-class machines. The firm are thoroughly straightforward."—*Cycling*, August 6th, 1898.
"Knowing the method on which the A.B. Cycle Company's business is done, we can honestly recommend the firm."—*Athletic Record*, September 3rd, 1898.

Send Answers Early.

Make up the best sentence you can out of Seven words, the first letter of each word beginning with a letter of "BICYCLE" in proper order. Thus: "**B**ut, **I**ndeed **C**ycling **Y**ou **C**an **L**earn **E**verywhere." It will be seen that the initial letter of each word in the foregoing sentence spells the word "Bicycle." Make up a different sentence and forward to us.

AN ABSOLUTELY FREE COMPETITION. We ask you to buy nothing before allowing you to participate in the Prizes. Neither after you have won a Prize (if you are fortunate enough to do so), do we compel you to purchase any accessories. You pay nothing to enter, and even if you receive one of our regret notices—and we make no secret of the fact that hundreds are unsuccessful—you are only out of pocket for the cost of two penny stamps, which the Post Office get the benefit of. Thus we can truthfully assert of this thoroughly genuine Competition that it is **ABSOLUTELY FREE TO ALL.**

All Machines guaranteed for Twelve Months.

REMEMBER IT ONLY COSTS A POSTAGE STAMP TO TRY.

FIRST PRIZE £23 A.B. SAFETY, FITTED WITH A.B. TYRES.

The following ladies and gentlemen are amongst the number of persons who have recently received Free Bicycles, each of whom has signed a Solemn Declaration that he or she is in no way connected, either directly or indirectly, with this Firm. We will forfeit £1,000 if this statement is incorrect. A FEW FREE CYCLE WINNERS: Mr. George A. Haynes, 9 Windsor Street, Barrow-in-Furness; Miss Mary-Page-Henderson, 8 Lexham Gardens, Kensington, W.; Mr. A. Merrilees, Harvay, Orkney; Mr. Arthur J. Woolnough, 29 Thomson Street, Govan, Glasgow; Mrs. Maria Fraser, Haglefort, Shinrone, Ireland; Mr. Robert Hughes, Llanidan, Anglesey, North Wales; Mr. L. Horne, 101 London Road, Oldham; etc, etc., etc.

Second Class (9 prizes) £23 Cycle for £9
Third Class (12 prizes) £23 Cycle for £10
Fourth Class (15 prizes) £23 Cycle for £11
Fifth Class (18 prizes) £23 Cycle for £12
Sixth Class (20 prizes) £23 Cycle for £13
Consolation (25 prizes) £23 Cycle for £14

TAKE PARTICULAR NOTICE.—COMPETITION IS NOW OPEN and closes **Monday, November 15th, 1898.** Results will be declared as soon as possible, although it may be a fortnight afterwards before all replies are posted.

Winners of prizes must clear them within a week or ten days, otherwise machines unclaimed will be passed on to the next in rotation. Prizes may be considerably increased in all or any one class. Unless stamp (*not a stamped envelope*, as our catalogue is a large (outside) size) is enclosed for postage of Catalogue and Result of Competition, the Company will not guarantee to inform Competitors of their success. Prize-winners need not purchase any accessories with their machines, unless they so desire. As the majority of the competitors may not be able to call and inspect the machines, **WE GUARANTEE TO REFUND THE FULL AMOUNT** paid for a second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, or for one of our consolation prizes, **IF THE OWNER IS NOT PERFECTLY SATISFIED** with it on arrival. We cannot give any money or other prizes in lieu of cycles, and consequently cannot enter into any discussion relating thereto. One solution only allowed to each competitor. Disregard of this regulation renders any prize liable to forfeiture.

£100

We offer this Reward to any lady or gentleman able to prove that we have ever in the whole course of our existence sold our cheapest machines under £15 cash either to any ordinary customer, agent, dealer or shipper. We do not allow a shilling extra discount beyond the 34 per cent. off the catalogue price to anyone, and even if we had an order for one hundred of our lowest priced machines we should refuse to supply them unless we were paid £1,500.

MARK LETTERS "SHORT STORIES," ON TOP CORNER OF ENVELOPE, AND ADDRESS TO THE MANAGING DIRECTOR,

A.B. CYCLE CO. LTD., 59 & 60 CHANCERY LANE, HOLBORN, W.C.

NOSE MACHINES as worn by Royalty. Shape altered permanently by few weeks' wear, 9/9 each. Red Nose cure, medically approved, 3/9. Pamphlet, "Cause and Prevention," 1/-; particulars for stamp. Mention Paper.
LEES RAY, Specialist, South Castle St., Liverpool.

MASON'S The Only Painless Corn Cure.

Never known to Fail. **KILLCORN**

Sold by all Chemists, Stores, &c., Price 1/- per bottle, or post free from the Proprietor, 3 Guildford St., Leeds.

LOOK HERE! To introduce our large Illustrated Catalogue of Novelties we will send for Four Stamps one pair SCISSORS and a POCKET KNIFE post free.

VARIETY COMPANY,
(Department 9) **DALSTON, LONDON.**

PALATABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR COD LIVER OIL.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM.—Really Genuine, in patent air-tight tins. ½lb., 10d.; 1lb., 1/4, 3lb., 2/4; including tin and postage. Mrs. CONYERS, Morchard Bishop, Devon.

GIVEN AWAY
HUNDREDS OF POUNDS IN PRIZES - EVERY COMPETITOR GETS ONE OR A 300 HOUSE
LIBERAL PAYMENT FOR WRAPPERS. PARTICULARS WITH EACH 2½d AND 3d BAR.
CHANCELLOR SOAPS

Send 2 stamps for Sample to 13 Clerkenwell Road, E.C.

HAVE YOU SEEN OUR CATALOGUE OF CHEAP CROCKERY?

If not, please get a post-card, and send it to

THE **PEARSON POTTERY CO.,** HANLEY,

And you will get it by return, together with particulars of the most Wonderful Package of Crockery the World has ever seen.

100 PIECES FOR £1 1s.

THOUSANDS SOLD ALL OVER THE WORLD.

A Dinner Service of 50 pieces is included, which is guaranteed to be worth the guinea alone, and a China Tea Service of 28 pieces finished in gold, together with a lot of useful kitchen crockery.

Post-cards and Letters to be addressed to the

PEARSON POTTERY COMPANY, HANLEY, STAFFS.

DIRECT FROM THE PATENTEE & SOLE MANUFACTURER TO THE CUSTOMER AT WHOLESALE PRICES.

THE WONDERFUL ORCHESTRAL ORGANETTE.

☞ SPECIAL OFFER—A FOUR-GUINEA ORGANETTE FOR 35/-

3 STOPS

By Royal Letters Patent.
A MERE CHILD CAN PLAY IT.
Size, 13in. long, 12½in. wide, 9½in. high, weighs 8lb.

The very **ACME OF MUSICAL INVENTION,** an instrument with as much variety of tone as a £25 organ. Every Orchestral Organette has **28 FULL-SIZE AMERICAN ORGAN REEDS,** controlled by **THREE STOPS,** viz., Flute, Expression, and Vox Humana, furnishing the **GRANDEST ORCHESTRAL EFFECTS. THE RANGE OF MUSIC AND TONE IS PRACTICALLY NLIMITED.** For **HOME ENTERTAINMENTS THEY ARE UNSURPASSED.** We **REFUND THE MONEY AND PAY CARRIAGE** to anyone not entirely satisfied after receiving it. Any tune can be played with artistic effect by anyone, young or old. We will give a selection of **MUSIC FREE** with each Instrument. Send money by Registered Letter, Crossed Cheque, or Money Order. For 2s. extra the Organette will be sent carriage paid.

J. M. DRAPER, ORGANETTE WORKS, BLACKBURN.

EASY PAYMENTS. We have decided to sell a limited number on following easy payments: **10s.** deposit and **5s.** monthly. Price **40s.** Full particulars on application.

KEATING'S LOZENGES

THERE IS NO BETTER REMEDY IN THE WHOLE WORLD FOR ALL COUGH AND THROAT TROUBLES THAN KEATING'S LOZENGES. ONE GIVES RELIEF. THEY WILL CURE, AND THEY WILL NOT INJURE YOUR HEALTH. THEY CONTAIN ONLY THE PUREST DRUGS.

Sold everywhere in 1/1½ Tins.

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Tincture of Halberis

DOSE—Five to Ten Drops in half a wineglassful of water.

A Specific Remedy for Biliousness, Liver Inaction, Heartburn, Indigestion, Acid Risings, Constipation, Headache, &c., &c. Prices: 1/1, 1/10, 2 8 and 4 9, post free.

GILBERT & HALL,
Homœopathic Chemists,
Bournemouth and Boscombe.

"MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH.

WARNING to LADIES.

BEWARE of POLISHES containing injurious ACIDS which RUIN your metals & SPOIL your HANDS.

TEST

TRY IT ON A PENNY. Dab a small quantity of Polish on a penny & leave it overnight. If it contains ACID, it will turn quite green by the following morning. BUT "MATCHLESS" WON'T!

FREE FROM ACID POISON OR GRIT

LARGEST SALE IN THE WORLD

PATON, CALVERT & Co. MANUFACTURERS, LIVERPOOL.

RED WHITE AND BLUE FRENCH COFFEE

SOLD EVERYWHERE

LYLE'S GOLDEN SYRUP

LONGEST ESTABLISHED PUREST & BEST

"LOUIS" VELVETEEN

LOUIS XI KING OF FRANCE 1461-1483.

See that the name spelt L.O.U.I.S is stamped on every Yard.

IT IS NOT

Reckitt's PARIS BLUE

UNLESS RECKITT'S NAME IS ON THE WRAPPER.

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